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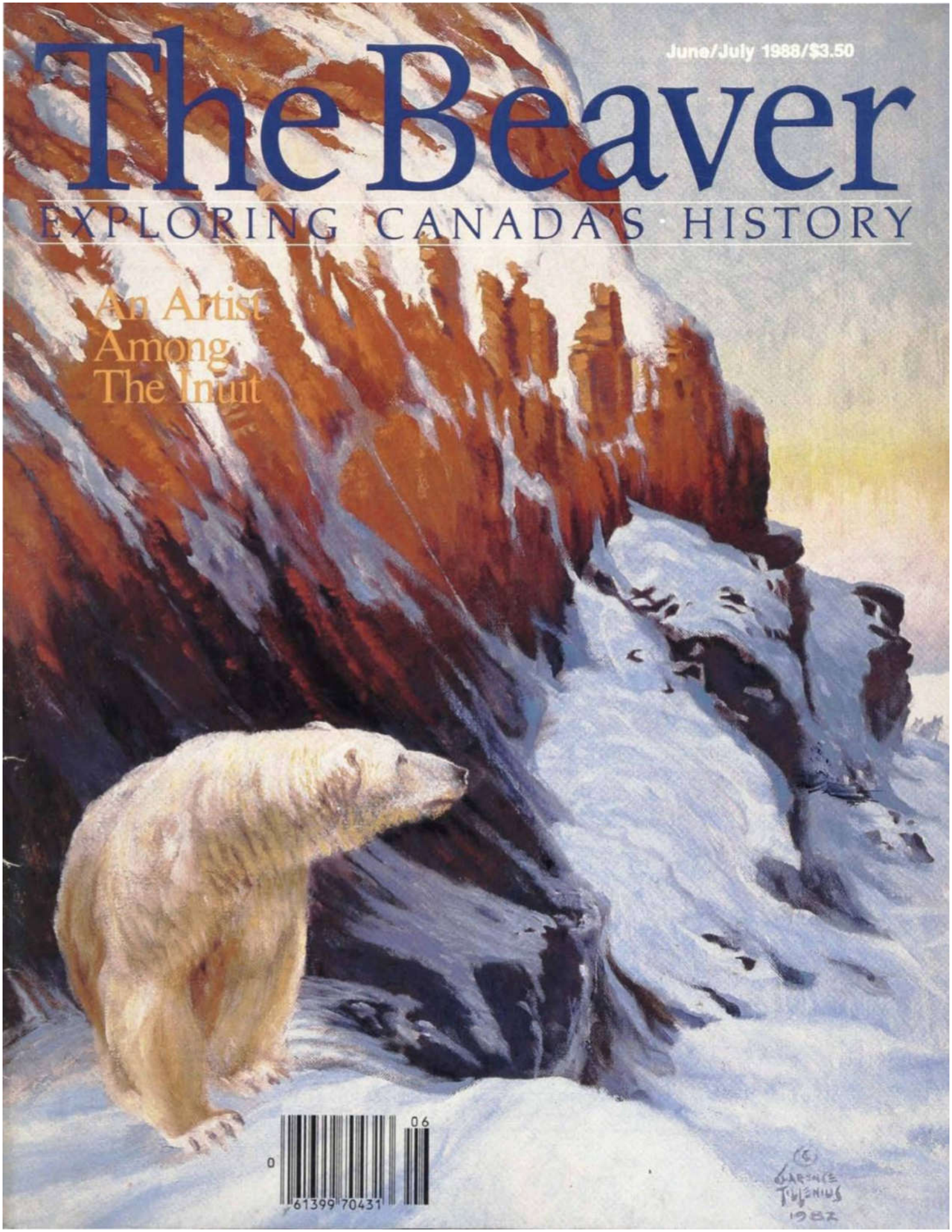
The Beaver

EXPLORING CANADA'S HISTORY

An Artist Among The Inuit



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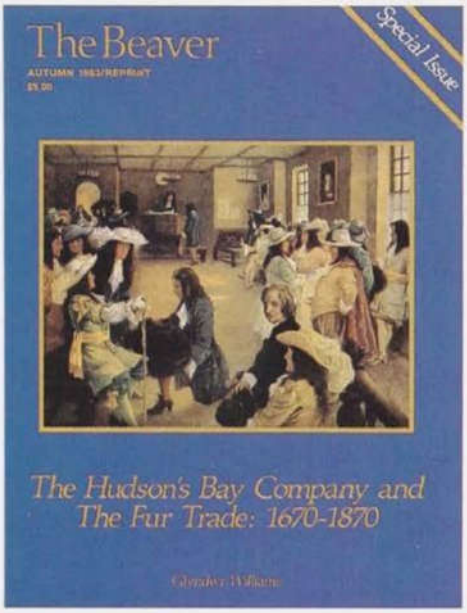

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By GLYNDWR WILLIAMS

86 pages. Illustrated

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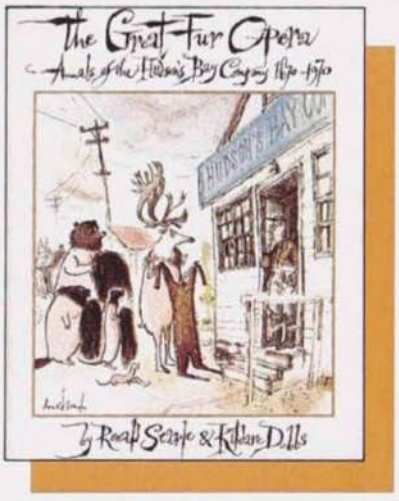

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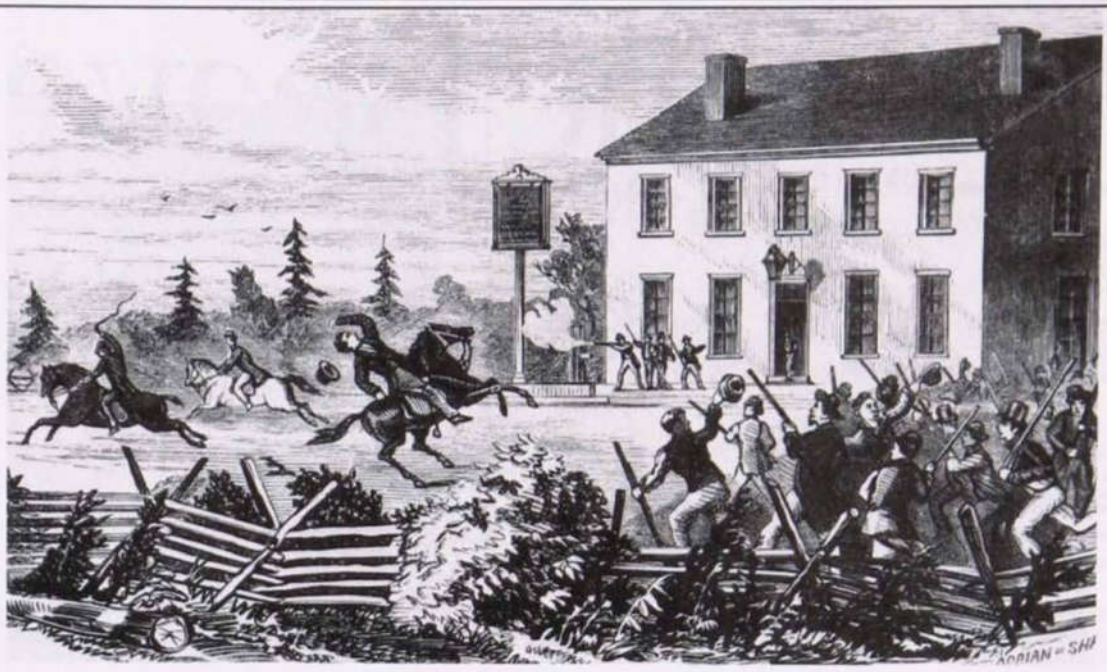


THE NOT SO PEACEABLE KINGDOM

Quakers Took Up Arms In the Rebellion of 1837

BY LAURA L. PEERS

Every four months throughout the mid-1830s Quakers in Upper Canada asked themselves, "Are Friends clear of bearing arms, of complying with military requisitions, and of paying any fine or tax in lieu thereof?" According to their belief in the evil of violence, Quakers refused to participate in any activity which promoted either the spirit or the machinery of war. This included such things as writing or publishing documents to do with war and selling goods to the military. Despite their convictions, a number of Quakers from both central and western Upper Canada chose to shoulder arms for the reform cause during the Rebellion of 1837. The long inward journey that these Friends made from pacifism to armed revolt, and from political frustration to violent action, was made only under the duress of political deadlock and the absence of any other avenues for long-needed changes. Their desperate and painful decision to act also had heavy consequences: of those who chose to fight, at least five were imprisoned for their efforts, one was hanged and a number were disowned by the Quaker meetings to which they belonged.

The Friends who participated in the Rebellion were no strangers to war. Many of their parents had come to Upper Canada after suffering during the American Revolution, both for their pacifism and for their pro-British feelings. The account of Isaac Webb, a Quaker living in Pennsylvania, illustrates the harassment to which Friends were subjected for their beliefs. According to family tradition, Webb's land was confiscated because of his Loyalist sympathies, after which he was threatened by Whig settlers:

> In the early part of the revolution of 1776 father's troubles commenced. The new Government called for all militia men they could raise. His principles opposing all war, he refused to go, and to escape their hands he went to the woods . . . for three months . . . In the fall of the year they ventured to go to a back settler's house of their acquaintance, thinking they might be pretty safe, but their enemies had got some knowledge of them, and came with a company of armed men . . .

Isaac and his companion escaped the gang, but felt it prudent to travel east and spend the winter in New York. When they returned the following summer, they faced an angry mob which was determined to hang or shoot "them ----- Tories!"

Like many others, the family involved in this incident tried to smooth things over and remain in the community they had worked so hard to build. But for many Quakers, the post-Revolution period was one of economic hardship, especially in recently settled areas. Once-promising Quaker communities in Pennsylvania were faced with the difficulties of recouping losses of property sustained during the war, as well as attacks by hostile Indians, floods, and more rapid non-Quaker population of previously isolated Quaker communities. By the 1790s, many Quakers began moving west into the newly-opened areas of Michigan territory and Ohio, and north into the developing colony of Upper Canada.

Quakers were attracted to Upper Canada for a variety of reasons. As Loyalists, some received land grants from the British Government. Land grants were also given in large blocks to several Quakers in order to settle several of the unpopulated "back townships". Timothy Rogers applied for forty farms (of two hundred acres each) in York County, and Samuel Phillips and Isaac Lundy were given twenty more just east of Rogers' area. Large blocks such as these offered extended families the chance to settle near each other, an advantage in pioneer society where labour was scarce and roads were poor. Other families who did not receive free land came because the land was relatively cheap, and because relatives had already moved. Isaac Webb "could see no prospects of having a house of his own" in Pennsylvania, and after labouring for over a decade on rented land he made up his mind to move to Canada. He was accompanied on this journey by four families, all of whom were related in one way or another. They were eager for the chance to begin new communities free from non-Quaker influences, and were happy at the promise of exemption from military duties in Upper Canada. After their trials in America, this must have been a deciding factor for some settlers.

The Quakers laboured throughout the first decades of the 1800s to build new homes and settlements. In parts of the Home District, they were the first to begin clearing the forest. By 1820, Quaker communities and meetings were well established in several clusters. One group in the Home District included the hamlets of Newmarket, Pickering, Pine Orchard, Uxbridge, and Sharon. Kingston, Adolphustown, and West Lake were among those in the eastern end of the province, and Norwich and Yarmouth in the western end. By the late 1830s, Quakers constituted 4,826 of Upper Canada's population (excluding that of York) of 358,021, but they were virtually the only inhabitants in some of the more isolated areas.

To their distress, however, both Quaker and non-Quaker settlers discovered that the development of the rural areas of Upper Canada was severely limited by the self-interest and inefficiency of the more powerful members of the provincial government, commonly known as the "Family Compact". Based primarily in York (now Toronto), the Compact was composed of upper-class men, many of whom were related and were appointed largely on the basis of patronage. The lifestyles and financial situations of Compact members were far removed from those of the settlers or small

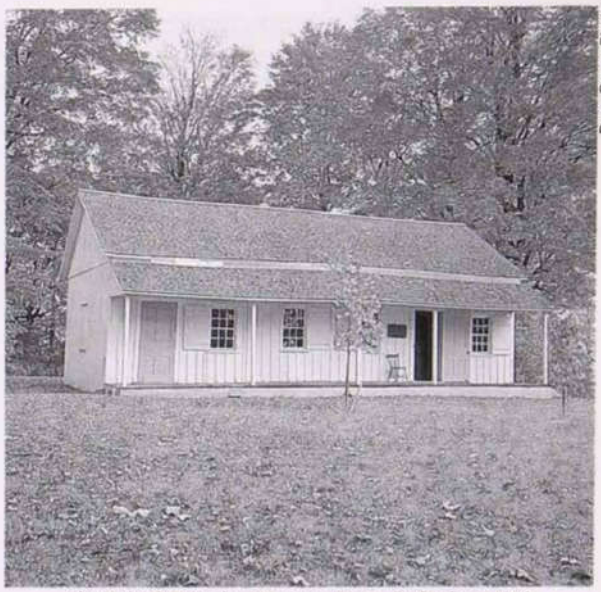
Fighting at Montgomery's Tavern, 1837 (top of page 4).

businessmen, and the Upper House seldom concerned itself with the basic needs of the majority of the population of Upper Canada.

Settlers also resented the Anglican Church's attempt to control the Clergy Reserves, which comprised one seventh of the province's land. While the Church of England was supported by the Compact, it was a religious minority in Upper Canada by the mid-1820s. The reserves also created difficulties for settlers trying to create compact communities, since they were largely uncleared. The Reserves must have been especially frustrating to the Quakers, who had no formal ministry and distrusted "hireling ministers" of all kinds. William Lyon Mackenzie, the strident publisher and Reformer who would lead the Rebellion in 1837, advocated selling the reserves and using part of the profits to improve roads. His suggestion was popular with settlers such as the Quakers. Where backwoods roads existed, they were often virtually impassable, and greatly retarded the growth of many small settlements.

The Quakers also suffered from the Family Compact's concerns about the dangers of American influence. While Loyalists from America had been welcomed into Upper Canada several decades earlier, the tensions caused by the War of 1812 created strong anti-American sentiments among the colony's upper class. One Quaker bitterly recalled that as a result of discrimination against settlers from the United States, "I saw my father deprived of his franchise . . . He could neither vote nor receive votes, though he had the necessary property qualifications and had worked hard for it." The fact that in many cases the Quakers were the best-established, the most literate, and the most qualified in their communities for public office made such restrictions especially galling. For a time, settlers of American background were even threatened by the loss of their lands. This situation was rectified in the late 1820s after petitions from the citizens to the British Government, but for years after their victory the Quakers and other settlers from the States remained resentful and suspicious of the Legislature.

In response to widespread problems such as these, the Reform party grew rapidly during the 1820s and 1830s. The Quakers' journey from political frustration to armed rebellion was continued by the impotence of this promising political development. Although Reformers often occupied most of the seats in the elected Assembly, they could accomplish nothing when pitted against the Compact-dominated Upper House. By the early 1830s, a number of townships were meeting to discuss means of reform, and formed permanent "Societies for the Preservation of the Constitutional Rights of British Subjects". These groups drafted petitions to the British government requesting such changes as a system of equal representation, the abolition of Crown and Clergy reserves, and the granting of



Drew Davey Photo

The Uxbridge Quaker Meeting House, built about 1820.

increased powers to Townships which would contribute to progress. One such petition signed by a number of people from Uxbridge in 1831 included the names of eight Quakers.

The township committees proved to be crucial training grounds for political awareness and for local Reform leadership. They were, of course, aided in these tasks by William Lyon Mackenzie's radical Reform newspaper and by his presence at many of the township meetings.

Frustration continued to build in the Quakers and their neighbours as, one by one, their hopes for peaceful change were dashed. The continued expulsion and re-election of Mackenzie from and to the Assembly mirrored the growing deadlock between the Assembly and the Legislature after 1834. The appointment of Sir Francis Bond Head (a supposed Reformer) as Lieutenant-Governor accomplished nothing, since he quickly proved himself an ally of the Compact. When the Reformers lost in the election of 1836 (after Bond Head and others had branded them Republicans and atheists), the Reformers' hopes of legislated, peaceable change were ended. Combined with a disastrous economy in 1836-37 and the threat of foreclosure which was faced by many farmers, this was for many the last peaceful step in the journey to rebellion.

During the summer of 1837, Mackenzie campaigned throughout a number of townships, calling for more strident measures by Reformers. By November, physical harassment of Reformers by Tories and Orangemen lent weight to Mackenzie's suggestion that the Reformers arm themselves. By this time, the "Societies for the Preservation of the Constitutional Rights

of British Subjects" had become "Committees of Vigilance", but while they agreed with the need for protection, they were not knowingly arming themselves for revolt.

Mackenzie revealed his plan for revolt late in November, much to the distress of his Quaker supporters. Joseph Gould, the son of a pioneer Quaker and a member of the Orthodox Quaker community in Uxbridge, tried to dissuade Mackenzie at a meeting in Stouffville. He was unsuccessful, of course, and "was taunted with cowardice" for his beliefs. Several weeks later, Gould participated in the fighting near Montgomery's Tavern on Yonge Street only because he was virtually waylaid and hauled there by a group of friends who looked upon him as their leader. Other Quakers were unaware of Mackenzie's final plan and believed that they were only going to demonstrate against the government. The majority of the Friends who took an active part in the Rebellion did so, however, because their consciences dictated that they should. Obeying one's conscience was an important part of Quaker belief, and had been used to interpret and apply the ideal of Quaker pacifism during the American Revolution and the War of 1812. Just as Quakers later became involved in the American Civil War because their consciences decreed that the evil of slavery was greater than the evil of war, so did some Upper Canadian Quakers feel that the need for political and social justice justified their participation in the Rebellion. It is no coincidence that both the Home District and London District, which each had several Quaker communities, had the highest numbers of citizens arrested for participation in the Rebellion.

Two Quakers attained some notoriety as leaders during the action. Joseph Gould had emerged as a community leader during the organization of the Township Committees in the 1830s. When he was taken to Montgomery's Tavern on 4 December he was dismayed at the lack of organization among the rebel forces gathered there and immediately posted guards and watches for the night. The following day, Gould participated in a battle in which one man, Captain Wideman, was killed and a number of others injured. Gould's narrative implies that he was armed with a rifle; other rebels, he notes, bore only pikes and pitchforks. When Gould and his companions heard that Montgomery's Tavern had been taken and burned by the government troops, they hid in the forest on the west side of Yonge Street and planned to escape to the United States. They made the mistake of building a fire at night, however, and were arrested and taken to Toronto.

The second Quaker leader, Joshua Doan, was also the son of a pioneer family in Sparta. A tanner by trade, Doan was provoked not only by the reasons which had so incensed Joseph Gould but also by the government's failure to honour its early promise of military exemption to Quakers. As early as the War of 1812, Quaker property was seized when they refused to pay fines in lieu of military service; this practice was frequent in the Yarmouth area. In early December of 1837, groups of rebels began assembling throughout the area from Sparta to Brantford under the leadership of Dr. Charles Duncombe. Just as Mackenzie's goal was to gain control of York, Duncombe's intention was to take possession of Brantford, Hamilton and the surrounding area and then join with Mackenzie. On the 12th, one group of about fifty men, including Joshua Doan, marched from Sparta to the rebel rendezvous at Scotland. There they learned of the defeat of Mackenzie's forces at Toronto, and were ordered by their leader to retreat to Norwich. The government militia followed close behind the rebels, and Joshua Doan's group was captured at Otter Creek (now Richmond). Doan escaped, and fled to the farm of Quaker Ephraim Haight in Sparta. Haight hid Doan in a log granary, after which Doan was able to flee to the States. Doan later participated in an attack on Windsor by a group of American "Patriots" and Upper Canadian rebels in December of 1838, one of several such attacks intended to overthrow the established order in Upper Canada and set up a more American form of government. Like the Rebellion, these invasions failed miserably. Doan was apprehended while trying to get

Uxbridge-Scott Museum

Uxbridge Quaker rebel Joseph Gould and his wife Mary.

back across the St. Clair River after the Windsor battle and was taken to London for sentencing.

The role of other rebel Friends is less certain. Some, such as Joel Gould and Joel P. Doan, accompanied their strong-minded relatives. Whether they were persuaded to go by the arguments of their families, or whether they went in an attempt to keep their relatives out of trouble, we shall never know. Joel Gould accompanied his brother Joseph to Montgomery's Tavern on 4 December, and was sent on the 5th with Captain Matthews to attack Toronto from the east, via the Don Bridge. Joel must have escaped from the troops after the altercations that day, for his name does not appear on the lists of those imprisoned as traitors. Joel Doan has been described as a leader in the uprising in the western part of the province, but his exact actions are unknown. He escaped capture and fled to the States for several months.

A group of Quakers at Norwich assisted the rebels who retreated there by allowing their meeting-house to be used as a rendezvous. One Friend also provided Charles Duncombe, the rebel leader in that area, with a Quaker outfit to help him escape the troops who were combing the roads and woods for him. Several years later when the English Quaker Joseph Gurney met in worship with the Norwich Quakers, he felt obliged to "proclaim Christ and his peaceable reign against all tumult and factions," and noted that "many of the Rebels were present" in the meeting-house.

Far less is known of the specific actions of other Friends who participated in the Rebellion. William Hilborn of Uxbridge took up arms "with a Company in the service of the late rebellion", as did Gideon Vernon, William Pearson, and John McMillan of the Home District, and Solomon Lossing and Edward Carmen of Norwich. Lossing, according to one source, had arranged for provisions for the rebels in the Norwich area. Lists of rebels arrested in the province after the fighting include a number of other persons who have Quaker surnames but who cannot be traced in Quaker records. These people were probably nominal Friends, that is, children of Quakers or children of previously disowned Friends who nevertheless attended Meetings for worship and were part of the Quaker community. They include William Rogers, William Doan, Ebenezer Moore, Robert Taylor, Jonathan Doan, John Randal, Enoch Moore, John Vernon, and Joshua Winn.

The prices paid by these rebel Friends for discarding their pacifism were varied, and sometimes surprising. One Quaker paid the highest price of all for his actions: Joshua Doan of Sparta was hanged for high treason on 6 February 1838. His last letter to his wife, written from his cell in London, reads in part, "I wish you to think of such questions as you may wish to ask me, as I do not know how long you will be permitted to stay . . . I must say good-bye for the night, and may God protect you and my dear child, and give you fortitude to meet that coming event. . ." Quaker Sarah Haight preached at his funeral, while Joshua's brother Israel paced up and down the meeting-house yard, grieving. Joel Doan returned briefly to Sparta and married Joshua's widow before moving permanently to California.

Several other Quakers were arrested, including Joseph Gould (291 days in prison), William Pearson (two weeks), John McMillan (two weeks), Gideon Vernon (seventy-one days) and Solomon Lossing (101 days). Lossing, a magistrate, was tried for treason but acquitted; the others were released after petitioning, being questioned, and promising to keep the peace.

In addition to being punished by civil authorities, Quakers also had to contend with their own communities after the Rebellion. As the Quaker Discipline, or guide-book, stated,

> Should members of our Society be so unmindful of our Christian testimony against war, as to bear arms . . . advice should be speedily given them; and after being tenderly treated with, in order to bring them to a sense of their error . . . unless they give satisfaction i.e., a satisfactory explanation or apology to the monthly meeting they are to be disowned.

Several Friends were evidently unable (or unwilling) to apologize for their actions. William Hilborn, who was apparently never arrested, was disowned by the Uxbridge Meeting for taking up arms. Edward Carmen of Norwich was similarly disowned, and the Yonge Street Monthly Meeting recorded in January of 1838 that two of its members (unnamed) were guilty "of bearing arms in the late Rebellion". Other rebel Friends, such as Gideon Vernon and Joshua and Joel Doan, were never disciplined or disowned by their meetings. There are no records of a meeting's decision not to discipline a member for rebelling, but it is not difficult to understand that the political frustration and personal conscience-searching which had led individual Friends to participate in the affair must also have lain behind a meeting's decision to say nothing.

Of course, not all Upper Canadian Quakers sympathized with the rebels. Some denounced the Rebellion as an attack on the Crown by a lawless pack of fools, atheists and Republicans. Hannah Palmer Moore, a staunch Quaker, later wrote a poem about the Rebellion which began with the stern word,

> Come, friends and neighbors, pray give ear
> While I relate a story
> Of what took place in the first year
> Of the reign of Queen Victoria.
> In Canada a strife began,
> A wild seditious frenzy
> Spread by a bold ambitious man
> Called William L. McKenzie . . .

Rebels marching down Yonge Street to attack Toronto, 1837.

Friend Hannah's poem hints at the tensions which must have existed in post-Rebellion Quaker communities, and reminds us how difficult it must have been for the few rebel Friends to make the decisions they did.

According to one source, the terms "rebel" and "son of a rebel" quickly became taunts which provoked fist-fights at many a non-Quaker gathering for decades; Quakers undoubtedly had their own ways of expressing disapproval outside of the meeting-house. Rebel Friends would also have faced harassment from Orangemen, who also saw the Rebellion as "a wild seditious frenzy" and were prone to using mob violence to express their sentiments to the rebels.

Orangemen aside, there was a great deal of support for the Rebellion in rural communities. This helped the rebel Quakers and their families restore their lives to order during 1838, and later contributed to the success of several of them as politicians and citizens of high standing in their areas. Joseph Gould, for example, became the first Reeve of Uxbridge Township in 1851, the first Warden of Ontario County in 1852, and was elected the first Member of Parliament for North Ontario in 1854. Beyond giving vent to their communities' frustrations and achieving some personal renown, however, the rebel Quakers accomplished little. The Rebellion led to Lord Durham's investigation, and to some changes in municipal government, but the causes of the Rebellion itself were not fully addressed until Britain granted responsible government a decade later — which occurred not because of the protest of 1837, but because of a shift in British colonial policy. Without benefit of hindsight, though, this handful of Friends bravely made the decision to break with their traditions and pursue what they saw as the only avenue left open to them in the struggle for reform. The rather ironic ending of Friend Hannah's poem might well serve as a fit epitaph for the rebel Quakers:

Their efforts all have been in vain,
Their hopes of triumph ended
Prosperity and perfect peace
Again their reign resuming
Now makes our hopes and joys increase,
Our prospects bright and blooming.
Long may Victoria wear the Crown
Worthy of good opinion
Dispense due justice all around
Throughout her wide Dominion. ◆

Laura L. Peers of Uxbridge, Ontario, has been conducting research on Quaker settlements in central Upper Canada.

CLARENCE TILLENIUS REMEMBERS

A BEAR FOR A DIORAMA

The ascending shriek of a gale-force blast and the sibilant hiss of driven snow warned us we were nearing the head of the valley, where the full fury of a blizzard would be upon us. Why not camp here in the sheltered canyon? The Inuit demurred. "Too danger", Nakoolak said, and we were told the tragic story of a group of Inuit travellers who had taken shelter in just such a canyon during a blizzard. The driving gale buried the canyon under 20 feet of snow and the entire group perished and were not found till the following year, when the melting snow revealed the bodies.

We did get out of the canyon. Later, in the teeth of a gale which several times blew the snow blocks down, the Inuit finally got an igloo built. Without it we could not have survived the night, yet next day we would arrive — frost-bitten but mobile — back at our starting point, Coral Harbour settlement, another polar bear hunt behind us.

On this expedition of Inuit bear hunters which I accompanied to find a setting for the polar bear diorama commissioned by the National Museum, we had set out from Coral Harbour on Southampton Island, and crossed the height of land following the Kokumiak River along the Porsild Mountains down to the Duke of York Bay.

Here on the frozen Kokumiak River we came on the track of a large male bear heading for the sea. Several dogs were let loose and they pursued the big bear out over the churning pack ice until they vanished from sight. Two of the hunters ran on, following the tracks out over the sea-ice.

My companion Ralph Hedlin and I arrived at the sea edge accompanied by Nakoolak and Paniyuk and made preparations to follow the hunters across the treacherously shifting ice pack. Nakoolak held us back, pointing to the surface of newly formed grey salt-ice and shaking his head, "No, No".

He then indicated we could follow him, and taking his wood handled steel seal harpoon in his hand and jabbing it down sharply on the ice ahead of him at every step, we cautiously shuffled forward across the newly formed salt-ice which undulated like rubber under our halting advance.

Suddenly Nakoolak stopped and held up his hand. Now we heard a mighty squealing, grinding and crashing as the huge ice cakes ahead of us began to jostle

During the 1960s the distinguished Canadian wildlife painter Clarence Tillenius travelled into the Canadian Arctic to gather material for paintings and for the magnificent dioramas that he has produced for Canadian museums. In this memoir he recalls an expedition with Inuit on Southampton Island in search of inspiration for his great diorama in the National Museum in Ottawa, depicting polar bears and the traditional hunting methods of the Inuit. Clarence Tillenius lives and works in Winnipeg. His paintings are in collections around the world.

and shift while black lanes of water appeared between them. A shout in the distance heralded the return of the hunters and their dogs, rushing to regain the land-fast ice near the shore before the moving ice pack carried them out to sea. The bear they had to abandon. Pressed by the pursuing dogs, he jumped into the open water from which he calmly defied the dogs. The hunters had shot him in the water and then discovered his bulk was so great that they would need additional dogs to haul him up over the jutting ice edge. They had just started back towards us when they too heard the squealing and roaring of the grinding ice floes and whipped the dogs to reach and cross the fast widening channel before it became impossible.

These old Inuit hunters were pretty cool customers. As the scrambling dogs pushed past Paniyuk where he stood on the rocking ice pan at the edge of the channel, he reached over and grabbed the tobacco can wedged under the sled's rope lashing and rolled himself a cigarette.

We asked the Inuit "What now?" Their answer was a shrug and *"eenamut"* meaning, "Whatever must be, must be." In other words, if the tide actually was moving out the bay might be clear of ice in an hour's time and the dead bear gone with the ice pack. On the other hand, if the ice stopped moving, it might stay just as it was for a week.

In any case, what they proposed to do immediately was to get their dog teams and sleds off the treacherous ice field and up on land, where we could boil up tea, slice up some frozen caribou meat and polar bear fat and heat up a couple of sardine tins. One needs to eat hot fat to keep up body heat in such frigid temperatures.

I had not actually realized how searing cold it was until a piece of my upper lip froze fast to the rim of the tin teacup. As the Inuit saw the piece of flesh tear off my lip they smiled and Nakoolak indicated with a gesture how to rotate the cup to slosh the hot tea up to the cup edge to warm it each time before taking a sip. Well, live and learn. Actually, I *knew* better, but my thoughts had been elsewhere.

About an hour had passed when Eecherk, who had gone back over the jumbled ice-pack to reconnoitre, returned and said the ice was quiet again and that he thought they should make another effort to salvage the bear since the hide of such a specimen could well be worth up to a thousand dollars.

Eecherk and Sateeana took off with a sled and one dog team and were soon out of sight. A half hour later we heard the yelping of the dogs and the outfit came into view. The huge bear was lashed on the sled, the dogs straining mightily in their collars and the two Inuit hunters pushing hard as the sled was dragged over the piled up ice barrier far out in the bay.

They made it none too soon, for even as the panting dogs dragged the burdened sled over the last of the jumbled ice-blocks and up on the shore we heard the squealing and grinding as the channel ice began to move again.

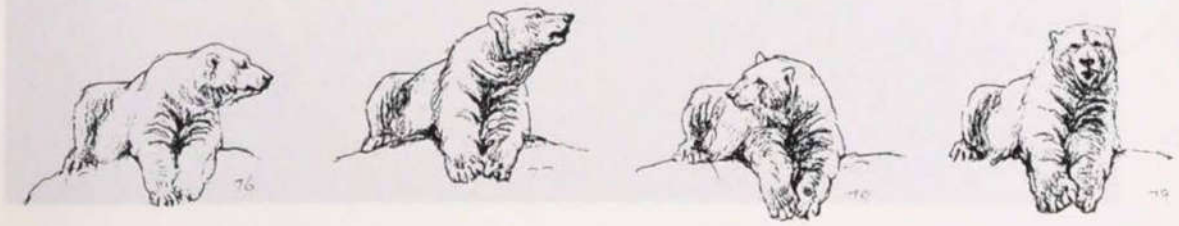
The four hunters stretched the great bear on his back and in an incredibly short time (10 minutes, I timed it with my watch) the hide was off and spread flat on the snow. In a few minutes more the carcass was dismembered, cut up and piled on the spread-out skin.

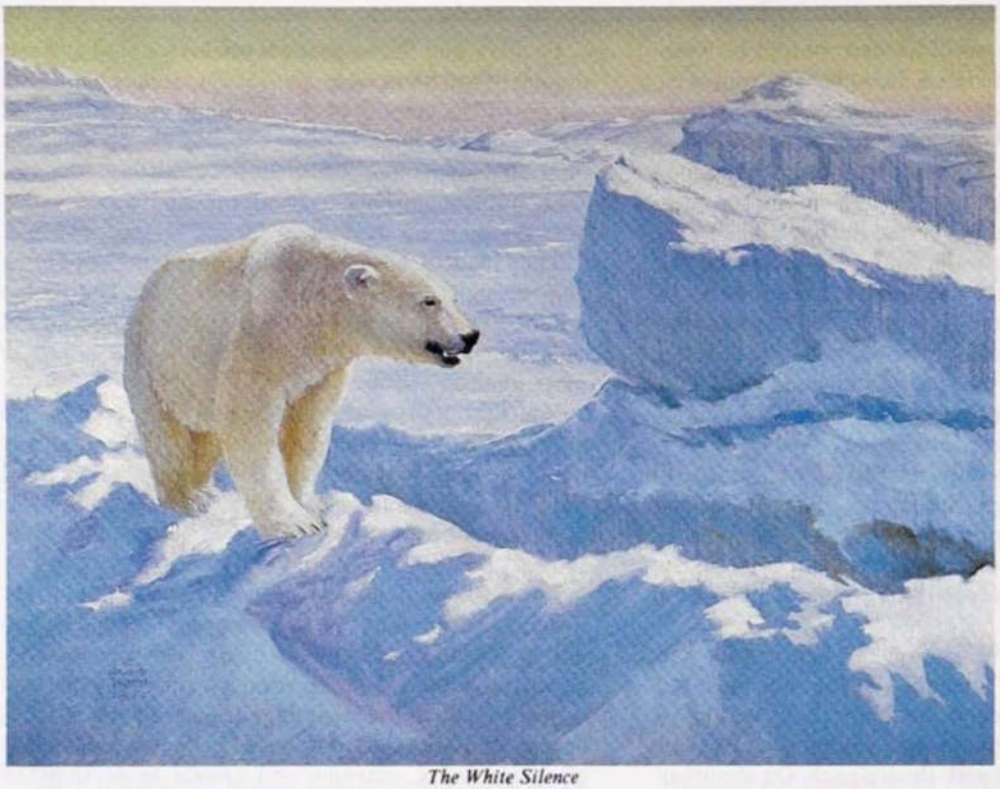
The ravenous dogs, who are only fed one meal every two days on the trail (this was the evening of the second day of grinding toil without food), had been looking on with steadily mounting voracity. Suddenly one dog leaped to gulp at the steaming, heaped-up pile of fresh bear meat and in the twinkling of an eye such a bedlam of snarls, yelps, screams and growls arose that the sound was like the end of the world.

With shouted maledictions, the hunters sprang into the midst of the wildly churning mass of dogs and bear-meat, swinging the wooden handles of their sealskin dog whips, kicking and tearing the fighting dogs apart. Here — if ever — was a scene I yearned to record with my camera, but — alas! — I was so stiff with cold that by the time I got my camera dragged out the battle was over and the beaten dogs chained away from the scene of their temptation.

This would have been a photo in a thousand. It was little consolation to find when I finally did get the camera out to attempt a picture that the shutter was frozen and no photo would have resulted anyway. Still in my mind's eye the scene is as vivid as when it first happened and probably the only reason I have not painted it is that such a painting, without the accompanying story to explain it, would be meaningless to viewers who were not there to see the event themselves.

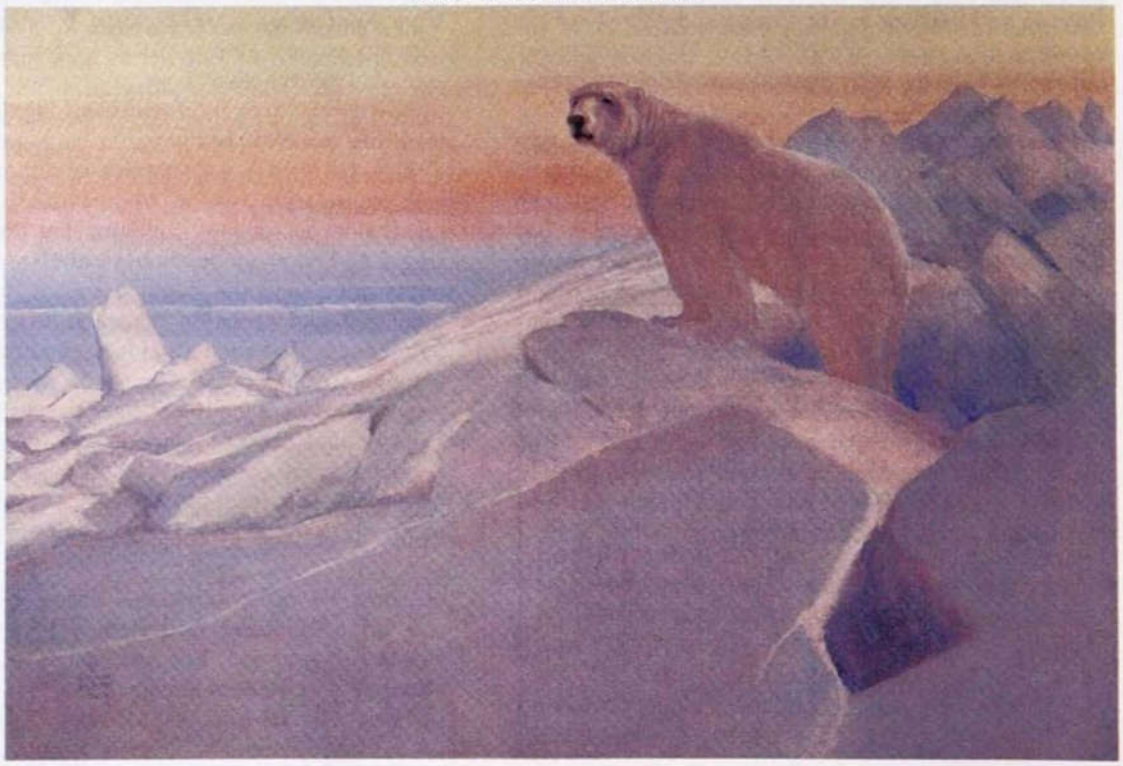
Later that evening, since it was the dogs' feeding day, I supposed they would be given some of the polar bear meat. It turned out, however, that the polar bear meat, which would be esteemed a delicacy by the people





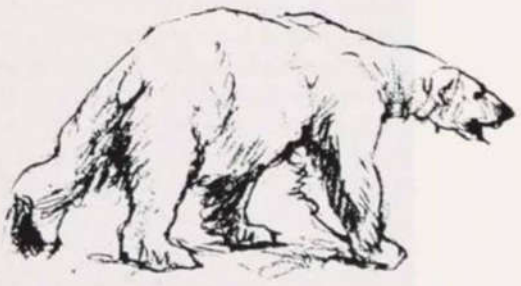
The White Silence

Arctic Seacoast in the Violet Dusk



The Beckoning Hills

Polar Bears Among the Ice Floes



back home in the native village, was to be preserved. The dogs would be fed from the front quarters of a frozen walrus carcass brought along for dog food.

Eskimo pups in the past generally had their cutting teeth knocked out with a hammer to make it harder for them to chew up and eat their sealskin harness or any leather equipment carelessly left where they could get at it. Since they could not chew well, Sateeana took an axe and chopped the rock-hard frozen walrus meat into tea-cup-size chunks which the starving dogs swallowed at a gulp one after the other. In the frightful cold of that evening they now stood shivering with distended bellies packed with frozen meat chunks. They were waiting until their internal heat thawed the frozen mass enough so that they could curl up in the snow and let their belated meal digest. Such is the life of an Inuit dog.

But harsh as this life is for the dog, it is neither more nor less harsh than the conditions of life for the Inuit hunter himself. Through uncounted generations this remarkable people has existed and survived in some of the most pitiless winter conditions known in the world.

Where the hunter's life depends on the toughness and endurance of his dogs, there can be no toleration of weakness. In softer climates little is risked if a dog is petted and pampered and allowed to shirk or ignore his master's command. For the hunter the alternative would often be death. A choice is not open to him. Either he has dogs that can endure and work to the last ounce of their strength or he can resign himself to remaining in his igloo and starving to death.

Though the conditions of sledge travel in the Arctic were sometimes so gruelling, I saw no hunter actually being deliberately cruel to his dogs. On the contrary, when the going uphill was particularly bad, the hunter often endeavoured to help the dogs by pushing on the heavily loaded sled himself.

Curiously enough, the dogs seemed eager to be harnessed and to take their places on the team. The hunters claimed that sometimes a puppy too young to be harnessed would seize his mother's leather trace in his teeth and try to pull alongside the other dogs in an endeavour to be part of the team.

Uninformed first impressions are often misleading. To see the dog-driver swing his arm back and send his formidable thirty-foot sealskin dog whip curling forward to lay it beside an erring dog with a crack like a rifle, and to hear the dog's agonized yelping is harrowing to the feelings. It took some time before I became aware that very seldom did the lash actually *touch* the dog. If the lash cracked right beside or underneath him, he understood that he was being singled out and yelped in response to forestall any further admonition, knowing that the next time he might *feel* the lash if he persisted in whatever he was doing wrong.

The indifference of the dogs to searing wind and to freezing cold was awesome. At the end of a day of hard travel, when they were unhooked from the sled, they looked for no shelter but simply lay down and curled up in the open, apparently totally unmindful of the whipping snow gusts that soon covered them.

More than once, stepping out of the igloo after a night of storm and drifting snow, I was surprised to see no dogs at all, only here and there several small snow mounds a little higher than the regular surface of the drifts. On such mornings the hunters methodically set about loading their sleds in preparation for the day's journey. When all was in readiness, the hunters gave a sharp call. Like magic, each of the silent snow mounds erupted into a snow encrusted dog who shook himself violently to rid his fur of drifted snow and then came racing to us, the members of each man's team running to line up in order in front of their master's sled.

We turned inland again, leaving the seacoast and following up the river system to a ridge separating two deep valleys. Here I saw a magnificent panorama and here, I determined, should be the setting for the National Museum's polar bear diorama. The low

afternoon sun lit the distant hills and bathed the opposite valley wall in a haze of gold and lilac so that the far off ridges dissolved at last, fold on fold, into the shimmering sky. Anxious to record the impression before the light and colour faded, I made a series of photographic exposures of the whole panorama from east to west, and when that was done I made a carbon pencil sketch of how I thought the diorama landscape might be designed from the scene before me.

Leading up and over a high knob of rust-coloured rock to the left was the track of a hunting bear. Here on the crest he had stood, surveying a kingdom that stretched as far as the eye could see across the folded hills even to the farthest horizon. Of this scene, too, I made a sketch and in my imagination was a canvas already designed and even the title it would bear: "The Beckoning Hills".

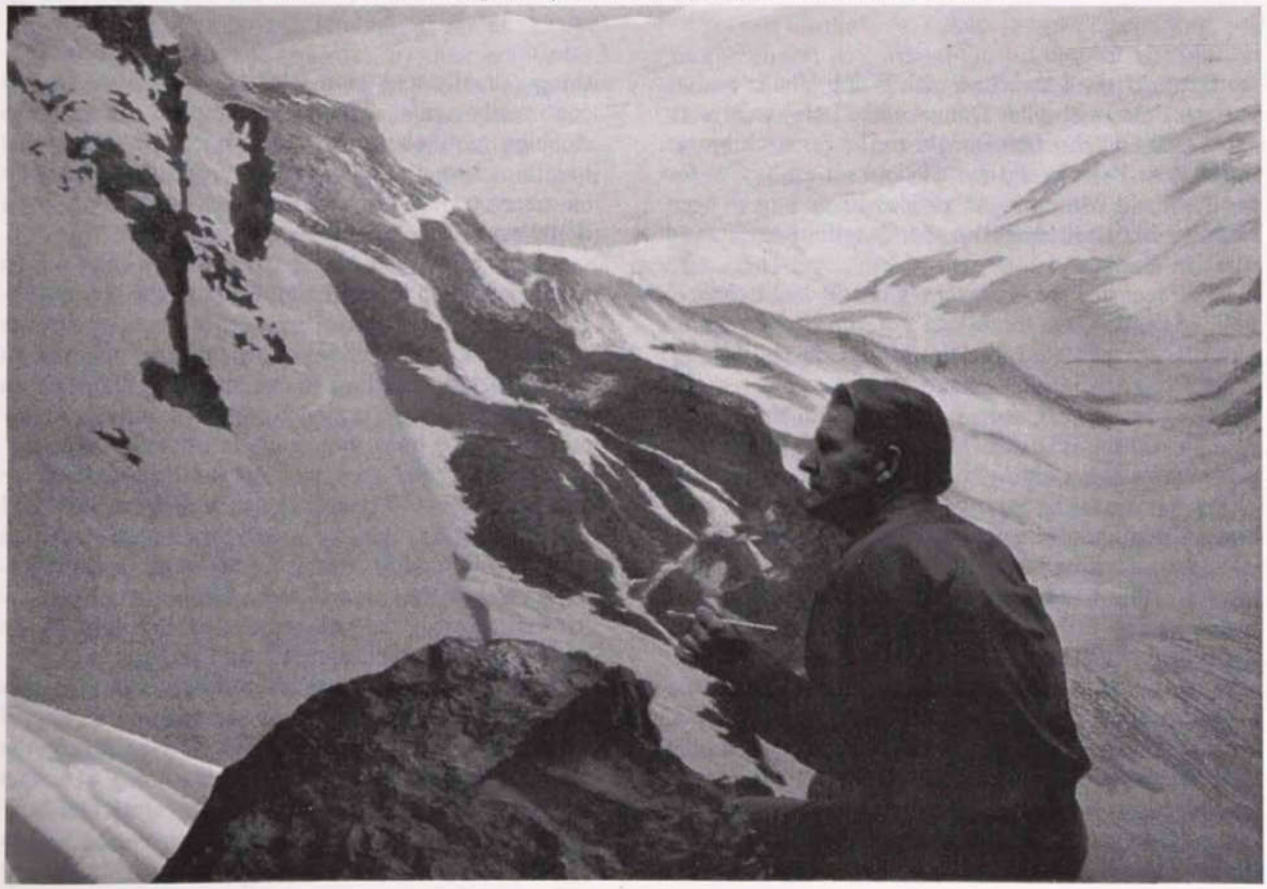
The hunters were now on the homeward quarter of our journey, but adventures both with blizzards and fog would be endured before we finally arrived back at our goal, the Hudson's Bay Company post at Coral Harbour. From the post manager we obtained a cabin in which I could complete my notes, sort out the thousand impressions and experiences of our travels with our Inuit hunting companions, and — regretfully — pack up our outfits for the journey south to what we optimistically characterize as "civilization".

From such thrilling scenes and episodes were built up the store of notes and sketches and studies out of which I created dioramas like the polar bear group in Canada's National Museum and the bear and seal diorama in Manitoba's Museum of Man and Nature.

From these studies also came paintings such as "Old Warrior", "Under the Canyon Wall", "Among the Arctic Ice Floes", "In the Polar Night", "Can't Keep Up", "The Intrepid Cub", "The Beckoning Hills", "Bear and Beluga", "Lord of the Ice Floes", "Polar Bear Hunting Along the Floe Edge", "She Bear and Cub", "Showing the Cubs Their Kingdom", "Arctic Sea Coast in the Violet Dusk", "The Great White", "In the White Silence", "In the Silent Arctic Night", as well as the hundreds of sketches and drawings in black and white.

On some of these expeditions it was my good fortune to be a companion of Eric Mitchell, a long-time Hudson's Bay Company post manager who is fluent in

Clarence Tillenius working on the polar bear diorama, National Museum, Ottawa, 1971.



Inuktitut. Often I travelled with Ralph Hedlin and at various times with pilot Doug Lamb. I also went with Dave Gill and Stu MacDonald to the research hut at Polar Bear Pass on Bathurst Island set up by Stu for the National Museum. At various times I have been in every Inuit settlement in the Canadian Arctic and some in Greenland.

Wherever I went, I kept a journal, I sketched, I painted, and when there was not time to sketch or paint, I took photographs to retain for me the impression of this fascinating polar world.

On earlier trips I soon learned that in the intense cold — 45° to 50° below was the usual January temperature — my ordinary sketching procedure was out of the question. Oil paint tubes were frozen like rock and ordinary graphite pencils made only a faint mark on frozen drawing paper in these conditions.

What I did was to carry charcoal sticks or a carbon pencil and with these I made quick sketch notes on a paper pad which was secured under the rope lashings holding the load on the kamotik (Inuit sled) from where I could whip it out in a moment. In that biting cold, I could only keep my caribou fur mitt off for a couple of minutes before my fingers would turn white and lose feeling, so any sketch *had* to be quick.

Another factor that I slowly became aware of was that the Inuit hunters, though seeming to do everything casually and in a leisurely way, were in fact continually active. They never stopped except when stooping motionless with harpoon poised over a seal breathing hole, so that to keep a record of all that went on meant continually making notes and jotting down sketches.

A camera was invaluable. At times my wrist was so paralyzed by chill that I simply could not get my fingers to perform. At such times to be able to point the camera and record an action where four men and 30 dogs were all mixed up in one shambles (hopeless to try to sketch it, the action is over in a matter of seconds) is just a boon impossible to praise sufficiently.

Even so, there were days when the thermometer dropped under 60° below, the camera froze solid and my fingers were too cold to hold it anyway. On such occasions I could only look on and store my observations until in the igloo at night I could thaw out my frost-stiffened limbs and record (by the light of the cooking kudlik) the impressions of the day.

In these journals and scattered sketches, stained with seal oil, polar bear fat, walrus and seal blood, matted with hairs of caribou, arctic fox and hare, are the priceless memories of these travels among a unique and indomitable race of people in their stark and wonderful arctic kingdom. ◆

Streamers & Dreamers

OF THE UPPER OTTAWA

By Boyce Richardson

When I returned to Canada from a long film-making trip to China in 1980, my greatest surprise, my most powerful impression, was something utterly banal. I took a drive from Ottawa to Montreal along the Ottawa Valley, through flat, green and pleasant lands stretching as far as the eye could see and was thunderstruck by their emptiness. There seemed to be little cultivation, no animals, few people. Much of the land had apparently once been worked and had returned or was returning to bush. None of the things that had become familiar to me in repeated trips across the North China plain were there: no roadside margins planted out in corn or wheat; no rivers sucked dry for irrigation waters; no caked mud trails; no village every kilometre along the way; no bewildering press of life on the roads; no skinny, haggard peasants hauling stones in hand-pulled carts.

The Chinese, I reflected, could support a million, or a million and a half people in this area without a problem.

The thought was not exactly original. Others had had it before me. In 1856 the minister of agriculture of the Canadas in a newspaper advertisement said that the country south of the Ottawa River "is capable of sustaining a population of eight million people", and urged its bright future on possible immigrants.

It was a bright future that never happened, though not for want of trying. To this day we have managed to put fewer than 800,000 of the minister's projected 8,000,000 people into this area of almost 5,500,000 acres. Even that number would never have been approached without the rather freak circumstance, which occurred two years after the minister's advertisement, that the region was chosen for the nation's capital. Leaving the capital city aside, we have put fewer than 200,000 into this enormous country, very far from the minister's hopes. The Ottawa Valley is not far from being a region that has been bypassed by history.

Yet it is a wonderful valley. It has a fascinating, one might almost say, romantic, history. In the earliest times of the European incursion into Canada the Ottawa was the main route to the interior. It was never an easy route, because from Montreal inland, about every twenty miles, the travellers were stopped by superb and unnegotiable rapids and falls. Difficult though they were, these falls held less terror for the exploring French than did the Iroquois, who commanded the St. Lawrence.

Yet even the Ottawa route was never a piece of cake, politically speaking. From the beginning, the French were anxious to get to the Huron country, off Georgian Bay, and this was the shortest route, 300 miles shorter than by the St. Lawrence. But the route ran through Algonquin territory, and the Algonquins were tough. The Hurons' great trading routes across the North depended on alliances with the Algonquins who bestrode the Ottawa, but the Algonquins were not always willing to pass the European traders through into the Huron country.

Champlain, on his 1613 trip up the Ottawa, made it as far as Allumette Island, where he was discouraged from going further by Chief Tessouat (the first of a number of Tessouats who figure in history). This is a large island of 68 square miles, with rapids on both its north and south bypass channels. Though it is thought that most voyageurs took the northern channel on the way into the interior, they invariably took the

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The Mill and Tavern of Philemon Wright on the north side of the Chaudière Falls, 1823.

southern channel on the way back with their furs. If they had not their journeys would probably have been impossible, because at the east end of the southern channel Tessouat's Algonquins for years maintained a kind of toll operation on tiny Morrison Island, commanding the narrow rapids opposite Allumette Island. It is a piquant thought (given that so many people believe the Indians were simply passive spectators to the founding of Canada) that for decades European movement into the interior was controlled by and dependent on the goodwill and co-operation of this small group. Forty years after Champlain, another Tessouat was still stopping the French from proceeding further inland. (Of course, most of these early Europeans thought they were well on the way to China as they made the arduous journey from one set of rapids to another.)

The Ottawa gradually lost its importance as a highway as settlement developed in southern Ontario and the fur trade became less vital to the growing colonies. Yet the dream that it could regain that role died very slowly, and is even yet alive in the breasts of some local romantics. For almost a century, indeed until 1927, the proposed Ottawa River route to the Great Lakes was a persistent and active factor in Canadian political life.

Too little remains from this long and vital segment of Canadian history, when the Ottawa was a major highway. Of the canoes, bateaux, Durham boats, steamboats, stagecoaches, horse-drawn railways, canals, even the rapids that constituted the challenge and response of the Ottawa, hardly anything is left. Inevitable, I suppose, since the early travellers did not build for permanence and were more interested in developing the country than in preserving their artifacts.

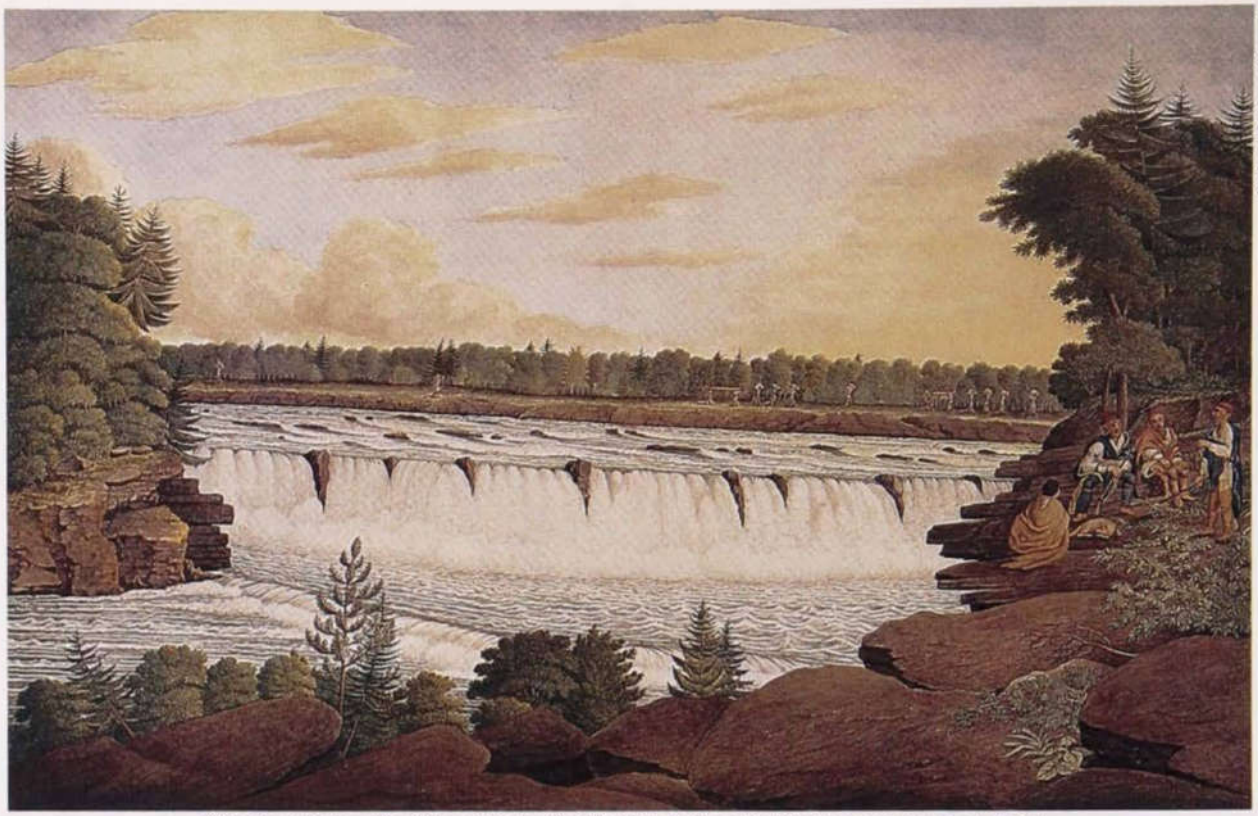
The going was tough, and not much wonder. The Ottawa was a veritable stairway of wild rapids, roaring and surging in the faces of its challengers.

How things have changed! These rapids are now tamed, drowned in a dozen reservoirs that placidly provide water for 43 generating stations. Perhaps overconfident of our technical mastery over Nature, we have built farms, roads and settlements in what was

once the Ottawa's flood plain. And when the river strikes back, as it does once every five years or so, we complain bitterly that there are not enough reservoirs, not enough dams, the river isn't tame enough, we have not got it under firm enough control. And so a great presence in early Canadian life — the wildness of the Ottawa — is gone for good. If you live in Ottawa now you get a sense of what it once was like only in the spring, when the waters roar over what is left of the Chaudière Falls between Ottawa and Hull. Even now it is awe-inspiring to watch, though the spectacle can scarcely match that observed by Champlain, the waters falling over the falls, he wrote, "with such impetuosity" that they had hollowed out a wide depression in the river bed.

In the early days they *had* to live with this monster: it was an elemental fact of life. I suppose in those days only the Indians knew that the Ottawa rises 250 kilometres almost due north of Ottawa, runs west for 500 kilometres through a maze of lakes, and then descends from Temiscaming in a graceful curve to the southeast until it joins the St. Lawrence at Montreal, 1,130 kilometres away from, and 360 metres lower than its headwaters.

Difficult though the rapids and falls made navigation, between the rapids the river was a stepladder of placid lakes which appeared to invite intimacy, pleasure — and settlement. Yet settlement was slow to come. The French established a couple of trading posts on the Upper Ottawa in the seventeenth century, one of which, Fort Coulonge, operated from the seventeenth century until closed by the Hudson's Bay Company in 1855. But the first settlers along the Ottawa were few and far between for many years, Philemon Wright at Hull being the most prominent of them. No real settlement occurred until 1816, when a group of demobilized soldiers, closely followed by several shiploads of British immigrants, made their way from Brockville north through the rugged and soggy Rideau country to where they established the village of Perth. (Canadian history is full of surprises: from the moment that the first sod was turned on the plain near Quebec City in 1628, it took nearly 200 years for settlement to spread a mere 300 miles west to the Ottawa country. That is half of the entire span of the history of European settlement in Canada to this day. We have a tendency to forget how long the pioneer days of Canada lasted.)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"The Great Falls on the Ottawa River". The Chaudière Falls painted by Thomas Davies in the 1790s.

The detailed story of this settlement is another subject, perhaps for another time: sufficient to say here that only one group of the settlers who moved into this wilderness over the next nine years took the Ottawa route. These were the demobbed soldiers and their families who founded Richmond in 1818. They made a tedious journey up the river from Montreal to the foot of the Chaudière Falls, which they called Richmond Landing. The worst impediment they confronted on the river were the Long Sault Rapids, the last and most ferocious of three sets of rapids about half-way up river between Montreal and Ottawa.

The families stayed at Richmond Landing while husbands and fathers hacked a way inland to their proposed new town.

Philemon Wright was already at work in the lumber trade before this settlement occurred. In 1806 he ran the first timber raft down the Ottawa to Quebec, and in 1819, in response to the new settlement, the enterprising Wright put his own steamship, the *Union*, on the river to ply between Richmond Landing and the rapids at Grenville, downstream 69 miles from Ottawa. By 1820 there were about 19,000 people living in the Ottawa country (though Ottawa itself did not yet exist).

The settlements at Perth and Richmond stimulated efforts to improve navigation on the river, but military thinking was even more important. Since the War of 1812 the British authorities had always been interested in building a secure route up the river from Montreal to Ottawa, and then across country to Kingston, thus bypassing the U.S.-controlled shoreline of the St. Lawrence. But for many years this route involved rather a brutal journey. The Lachine Rapids had stopped Cartier; the Long Sault Rapids had given the military settlers a hard time in 1818, and the Chaudière Falls, then, as now, provided a complete blockage at Ottawa. In 1825, when the infamous Scottish laird McNab gathered his innocent flock of immigrants from the ships at Montreal, it took them 28 days to make it up river to what is now Arnprior, 30 miles above Ottawa.

The first work was undertaken in the 1820s. The Lachine Canal was finished at Montreal in 1825, simplifying access from Montreal both to the St. Lawrence and the Ottawa, and the following year a new canal was started around the Long Sault Rapids. That same year Colonel John By began work on the Rideau Canal, which was opened in 1832. These works certainly aided navigation on the Lower Ottawa, but already there were enthusiasts living above Ottawa — lumber entrepreneurs, in particular — who strongly urged Colonel By, while at work on the Rideau, to build a spur across country to bypass the Chaudière Falls. This was never

done, which, with hindsight, can be seen as an immense lost opportunity.

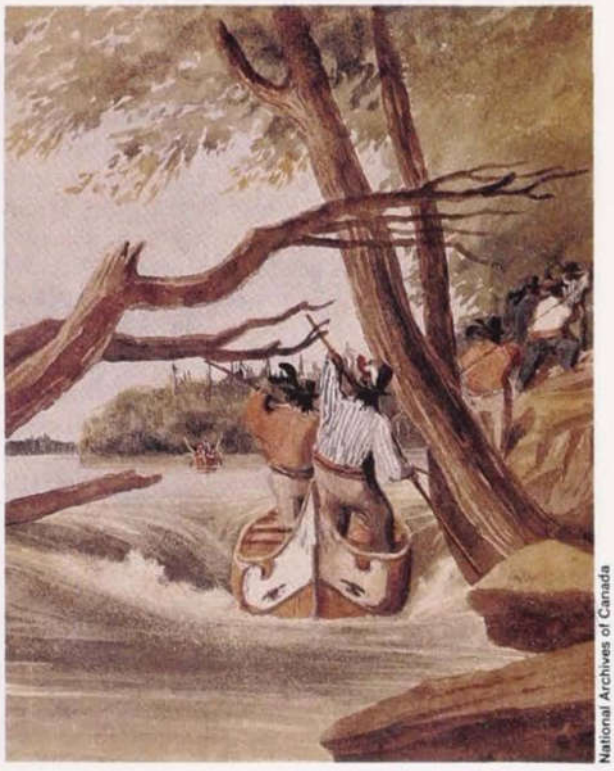
The leader of the group who made this suggestion in 1829 was Charles Shirriff, one of the early individualists who had settled on the river above Ottawa. His son Alexander had explored the country to the west, where he found "probably inexhaustible" supplies of red pine. "We may expect the growth of the timber to be more than sufficient to keep pace with the annual cutting," wrote Alexander Shirriff, who could scarcely have foreseen the voracious appetite of modern industry.

Shirriff believed the only obstacle to the growth of a large timber industry was the difficulty of getting enough provisions up river to keep the workers going through the winter.

Though they failed at that time, these enthusiasts kept up their pressure, and seven years later managed to take the eccentric new Lieutenant-Governor, Sir Francis Bond Head, on a tour of the Upper Ottawa. Head was impressed, and as a result, David Thompson, famous for his work in Western Canada, was asked to make a survey of the possibilities. At the age of 67, travelling through this wilderness in the bitter cold of December, 1837, Thompson was not as impressed as Head, and following his negative report, the scheme for transforming the Ottawa into the major route into the interior was dropped (for the moment).

Meantime the people concerned navigated the river as best they could. Nowadays people are surprised to learn that for many years there was a regular steamship service along the Ottawa over a distance of almost 300 miles. This service stretched inland as far as the Rapides des Joachims (for some reason, known in the local language as *Da Swisha*). The various steamboats worked on the several smooth lakes between the rapids whose vitality made any trip up river into a sort of obstacle course. In the early 1820s, a trip from Montreal involved, first, a coach ride to Lachine (later eliminated by the Lachine Canal), then a trip by steamer through two wide bodies of water where the Ottawa and St. Lawrence meet, Lac St. Louis and the Lake of Two Mountains. This steamer could go as far as Carillon, where it encountered the first of three rapids that blocked the river over the next 12 miles. Though canals were opened in 1834 around each of these rapids, the work was not done with any foresight: the upper three locks of the Grenville Canal were too small for the rather large steamers that plied the lakes. So the 12-mile land passage by coach along the Quebec side of the river past the rapids remained a necessary part of the trip until the steamers finally went out of service in 1910.

At the end of this coach ride, at Grenville, Philemon Wright's ship the *Union* (or a couple of other steamers that were soon competing with him) picked up pas-



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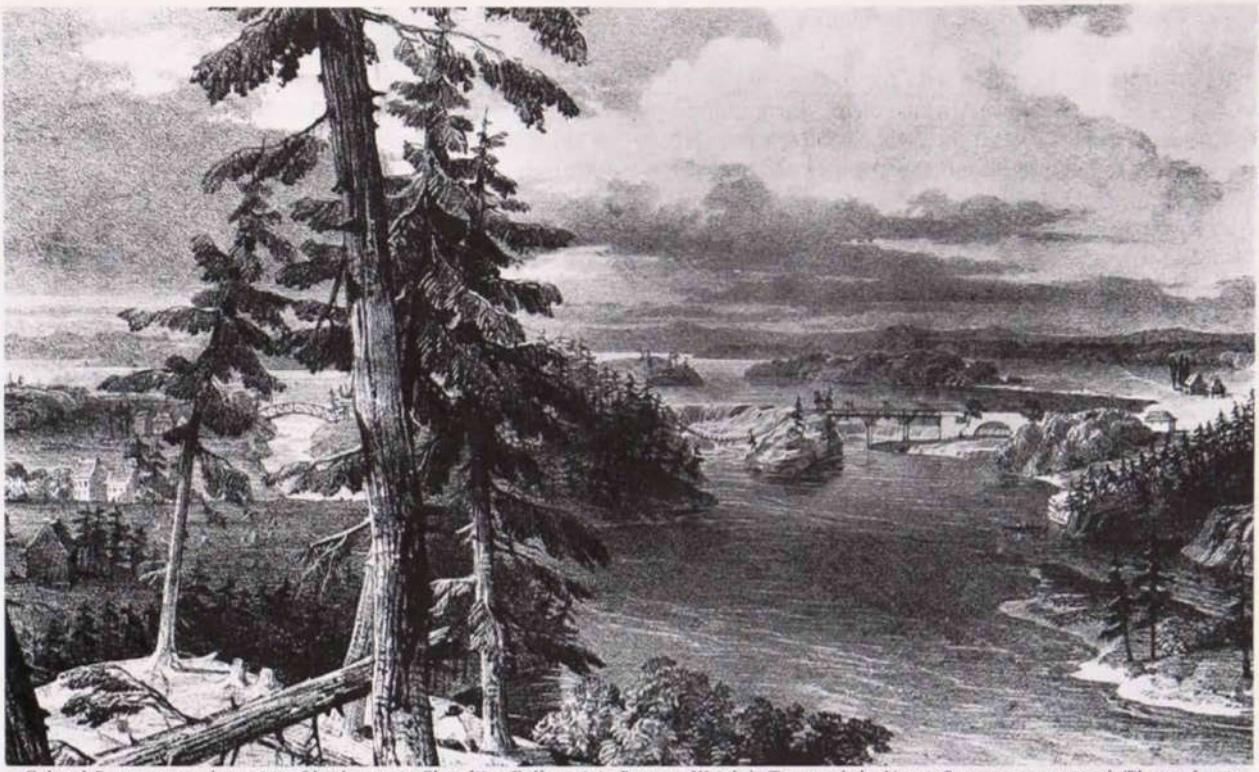
Canoes of the Hudson's Bay Company at the Chats Falls on the Ottawa, 1838, from a painting by P.J. Bainbrigge.



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Colonel By constructed a series of bridges over Chaudière Falls to join Bytown, Wright's Town and the Upper Ottawa portage road. The work was completed in 1827. This view was drawn by R.S.M. Bouchette from a point near what is now Parliament Hill.

sengers for a 34-hour trip up river to Hull.

This lower part of the river is considerably used today by pleasure craft, which can make a circuit from Montreal up the Ottawa and down through the Rideau to the St. Lawrence and so into the Great Lakes. With this intensive use the Rideau Canal is only now really coming into its own: carefully restored and managed by Parks Canada, it is regarded as the finest extant example of a nineteenth-century canal, and it is hard to exaggerate its significance either as an historical artifact, or as a magnificent urban-rural resource in eastern Ontario.

What is not so well remembered is the chequered and somewhat romantic history of navigation on the Ottawa upstream from the capital city. Here, the first steamboat was placed on the river in 1832. At that time anyone travelling upstream from Ottawa had first to cross the river to the Quebec side, then travel several miles out to Aylmer by Conroy's Bytown and Aylmer Stage Line, to avoid the Chaudière Falls and the three smaller rapids above them (which are still visible).

From Aylmer, this steamer, the *Lady Colborne*, ran upstream through Lac Deschenes until stopped about 20 miles up river by the magnificent Chats Falls. The river here split into several channels over its two-mile width, and fell 38 feet in 15 or 16 beautiful falls over the solid ridge of rock that spread from one shoreline to the other. The many falls were divided by small wooded islands, and in the nineteenth century this spectacle became a major tourist attraction. (Unfortunately, it no longer exists, having been eliminated by a generating station in 1931). Above the falls there were three miles of difficult rapids, which early voyageurs used to negotiate by use of poles, paddles and tow lines. But above that the river flattened into the lovely Chats Lake.

The passage around Chats Falls and Rapids was always a problem, which over the years called forth many ingenious solutions. For fourteen years *Lady Colborne* passengers had to disembark short of the falls, walk a short portage road, take a ride in an open boat to an island, make a second portage across the island, and then board the steamer *George Buchanan,* that began service on Chats Lake in 1836.

These two vessels were eventually replaced by 140-foot long, double-decker paddle steamers, and at about the same time the two steamers were linked by one of the strangest little railroads in Canadian history, the three-and-a-half mile Union Rail Road, that bypassed the falls on the Quebec side.

This was only the second railway built in Canada West (or Ontario), the first being in Niagara. The

nearest railway to it was the nine-mile track opened the same year that ran from Montreal to Lachine.

To catch this train, passengers disembarked from the downstream steamer, the *Emerald*, at Pontiac Village (a tiny settlement that sprang into being to service the railway). They mounted a flight of stairs to the cars on a platform 50 feet above the river level, and at the flick of a whip the horses that drew the railcars (the grade would have been beyond the steam-engines of the day, it is said) were off. They pulled the little train through "wild, unbroken woods", according to the company's enthusiastic description of the experience, around the shores of a small lake, and back into the wilderness before reaching Union Village on Chats Lake. It is melancholy that no trace of this romantic early railroad remains.

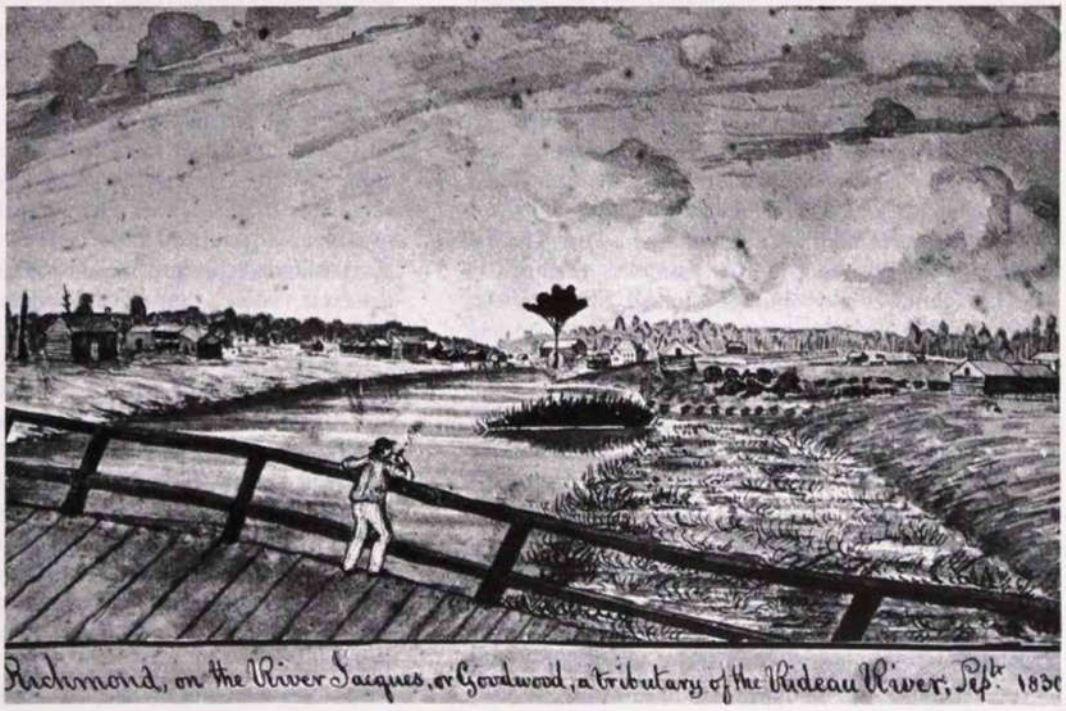
The up river journey, of course, was far from over at this point. The *George Buchanan* could run up Chats Lake to Portage du Fort, where it was blocked by another 17-foot fall. From there passengers were taken by wagon across country to Muskrat Lake, thence by small steamer up the lake and the Muskrat River, coming out on the Ottawa three miles short of Pembroke, again in face of a set of formidable rapids; and so into a final stagecoach for the run into Pembroke. The journey, according to the Union Forwarding and Railway Company's schedules, began at 7 a.m. and ended "the same evening" on arrival in Pembroke.

The detour by Muskrat Lake cut some 48 miles off a bend in the Ottawa River, around Calumet and Allumette islands, both of which were surrounded by difficult waters. It was part of Shirriff's suggestion in 1829 that a canal should be built along the short cut by Muskrat Lake, but Thompson turned thumbs down on it, doubtful that there was enough water in the river to sustain a canal system.

In spite of all these obstacles, for years the navigation of the Upper Ottawa was a thriving business. By 1868 the Union Company had nine steamers plying the river on a regular schedule. It is understandable that the dream of improving the cumbersome route never died, because until the railway arrived at Pembroke from the south in 1876, the river was the only means of access into a huge area of Canada that many visionaries believed would eventually be crowded with millions of people.

The dreamers never gave up. Nearly 30 years after Thompson's negative report, local lumbermen used their connections in Montreal to have 200,000 pounds appropriated for a canal that would bypass Chats Falls, and eliminate the need for the horse-drawn railway. Between 1854 and 1856, in fact, two cuts were made by workers who confronted the brutally difficult job of drilling the rock by hand. The contractors spent nearly half a million dollars — a lot of money in those days — exhausted their credit, dipped into their own

"Richmond, on the River Jacques or Goodwood," as depicted in 1830 by Thomas Burrowes.



National Archives of Canada

The Chats Falls Canal today: abandoned and forgotten, even by the dreamers

funds, and in 1856 were refused a further advance by the government. The work was abandoned. The proposed four locks were never built, and today, by walking for a couple of miles along a Canadian National Railway track just before it crosses the river from Quebec into Ontario, one can reach a small cutting through the rocks, one end of which is now blocked by the railroad bed. This cutting was never used, except to bury the dreams of local visionaries. This part of Pontiac County is still a largely English-speaking area of Quebec. On the day I went out there to search for the cutting, I found that some locals knew where it was, but had little idea of its provenance, while others had never heard of the nineteenth-century canal, and regarded my search for it as quite eccentric. I found the canal, of course, totally abandoned, its significance in Canadian history not even recognized by a plaque. It is in beautiful wooded countryside, just along the tracks from a collection of riverside cottages, up river from the hydro dam that buried the Chats Falls. At the very least this evidence of a failed dream, surrounded by piles of rock broken 130 years ago, could be turned into a minor tourist attraction.

Only one other canal was built on the Upper Ottawa, in the 1870s. This one, the Culbute, was designed to ease navigation round Allumette Island, but it too was little used. The railway soon arrived in Pembroke, and the canal's wood locks rotted away into total disuse within 15 years.

The third and final stage of the Upper Ottawa navigation was from Pembroke through the Deep River Reach to the Rapides des Joachims. This is a long and beautiful stretch where in places the river is more than 200 feet deep. There are cliffs here rising 900 feet above the water, beautiful points of land extending into the river, sandy promontories — and the nuclear laboratories of Chalk River. This is still a backwater, much cherished by its relatively few residents, who describe it as a paradise. But I suppose in Canada it is nothing to make a fuss about — just an exceptionally beautiful part of one of the country's many wonderful river valleys. A steamer was put into service on this stretch of the river in 1854, and another steamer was still working at the turn of the century.

But steam navigation never went beyond the Des Joachims Rapids at the end of the Deep River Reach. The early explorers and traders continued past here, of course, establishing at least two trading posts (Dumoine and Mattawa), in the few miles upstream to the confluence with the French River, by which access was made across country to Georgian Bay in Lake Huron.

The railroads may have killed steam navigation on the river, but they never killed the idea of the Ottawa as Canada's Grand Trunk Route to the interior. Grandiose proposals for the Georgian Bay Ship Canal, as it was known — an alternative to the St. Lawrence Seaway — were repeatedly considered in Parliament until finally put to rest in 1927.

But though that dream may now be dead, there is still a Council for the Champlain Waterway, founded by people of the Upper Ottawa, who are still trying to convince governments of the need for a navigable route round the dams that now block navigation along the river. Their argument has some sense: the Upper Ottawa is indeed a beautiful region. But the only practicable way to link the river's various parts now would be by installing half a dozen expensive hydraulic lifts that could pick boats out of the water and put them back in above the dams. These cost money, far more than the few people who inhabit the Upper Ottawa are ever likely to be able to afford.

Thus the river, however essential it may have been in the early history of Canada, seems destined to remain a colourful backwater in the stream of Canadian life. ◆

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The Madness Of Donald Mackay

An Iron Man of the Fur Trade Made His Own Claim to Immortality

BY HARRY W. DUCKWORTH

The history of the early fur trade in Western Canada teems with individuals who can never be more than names. Even major figures, whose exploits are familiar, and whose contributions are undoubted, walk through the pages like shadows, briefly illuminated by the brilliance of particular episodes. Some left their own accounts of their adventures, which provide almost our only information about them. For others, just as important in their own ways, the casual references of friends or rivals give the few facts which have come down to us. It is rare to find a character who can be studied both from his own writing and from the attentive observations of his colleagues. One such man was Donald Mackay, known to some of his contemporaries as "Mad Mackay", or Mackay *le malin*. Mackay spent a total of fifteen winters in the fur trade of the North West, three as a clerk for Canadian traders, two as his own master, and ten in the employment of the Hudson's Bay Company. Much of this career may be traced by references in the Hudson's Bay Company Archives, and several of his own journals, kept during his service with the Company, are held in that collection. This evidence leaves gaps, but the gaps may largely be filled by a set of reminiscences, called by Mackay his diary, which he wrote after his fur trade career was over, and which survives almost complete (only the first page is missing) in the hands of his descendants. The extra dimension provided by this personal memoir lets us believe that we are seeing Donald Mackay in the round. The view is interesting. Let us begin in the middle of the story.

On a cold day in January 1786, two employees of the Hudson's Bay Company were making their way along the Saskatchewan River from Cumberland House to the Company's upper settlement on the river, when they came upon a fur trader's shack which they had not known was there. Inside were two men, badly off for food. One was Donald Mackay, an independent trader who had brought two canoes of trading goods to the Saskatchewan the preceding October, but had been taken in the ice and forced to winter far from Indians and dependable provisions; the other was one of his men. All of Mackay's other men were off looking for Indians, or had run away. Though short of provisions themselves, the Hudson's Bay men shared what they had, and set a few gun snares about the house, in case any game should venture near. Then they proceeded on their way.

Mackay's one companion quickly fell into despair, and a few days later, when Mackay returned from a partridge hunt, he opened the cabin door to see his man, drunk to the point of incoherence, raising a razor to his own throat. Conquering his dismay with difficulty, Mackay managed to get the razor, tied the man

to prevent him doing further mischief, and then built up the fire, cooked the meal, and fed it to the would-be suicide. With a confidence he did not feel, Mackay assured the man that the Hudson's Bay people, who had seen their starving condition, would be bound to come back soon, with more food to save them. When a few days later, three sleds of provisions did arrive from William Tomison, the Hudson's Bay Company's master on the Saskatchewan, Donald Mackay was so surprised, and so touched, that he remembered Tomison as a friend for the rest of his life.

The sort of small-scale enterprise that had brought Mackay and his two canoes to the Saskatchewan in the fall of 1785 was some ten or fifteen years out of date, for the day of the independent trader in the North West had gone by. Now the Saskatchewan Indians had three strong interests to trade with — the North West Company, whose partner, William Holmes, commanded the largest force of voyageurs on the river; the Hudson's Bay Company, less numerous than the first but ably led by the experienced Orkneyman, William Tomison; and the new Montreal partnership of Gregory and McLeod, whose associate Peter Pangman represented them in the region. All these interests were well supplied with goods, which they could use to purchase game from the Indians as well as furs, and their men were experienced. To William Holmes, Donald Mackay's hungry little expedition was barely a joke.

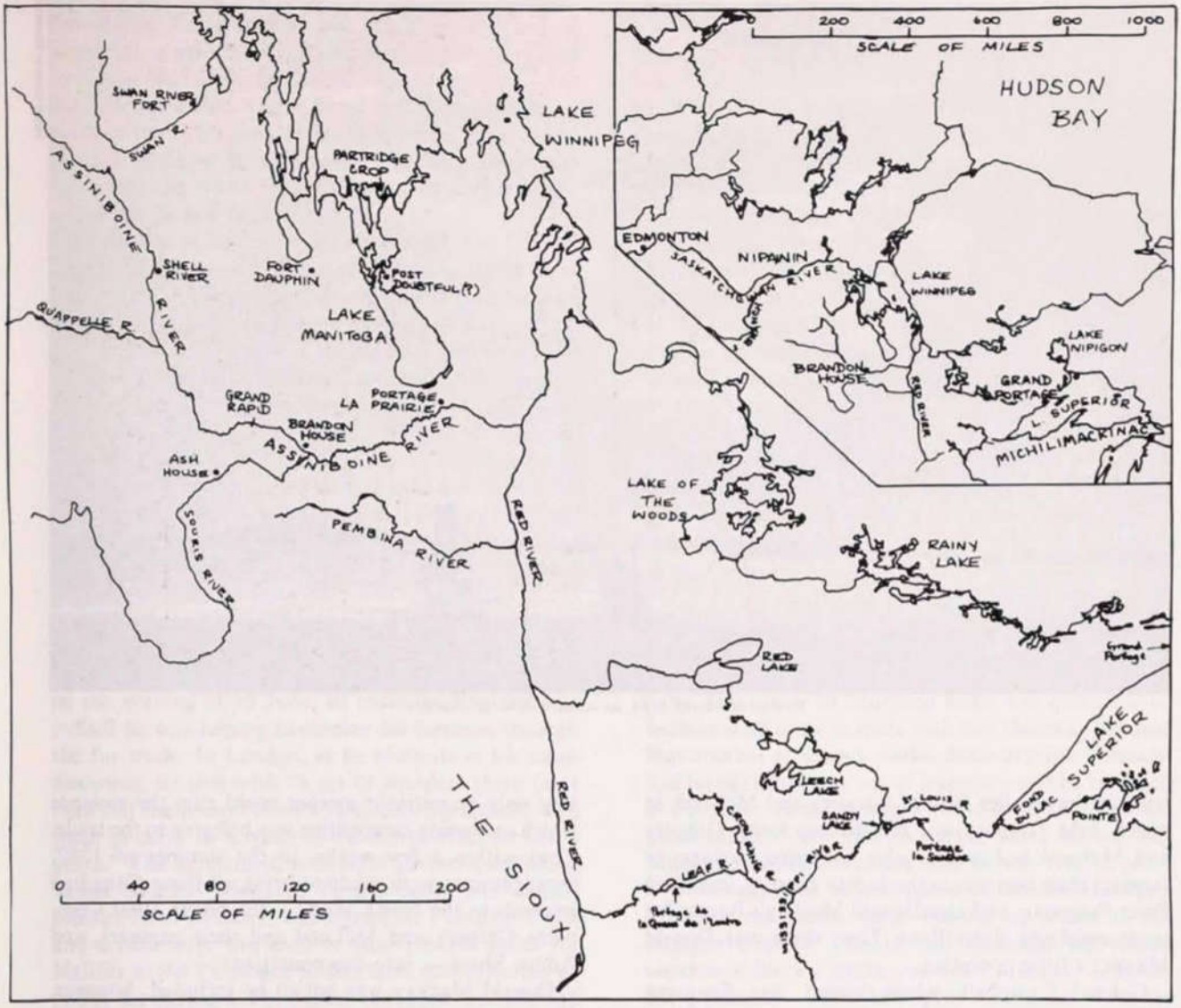
Little is known of Mackay's career before he entered the fur trade. He was born about 1753 in Clyne, the Sutherlandshire parish which contains the valley of the Brora River, in the farthest Highlands of Scotland. He spent some time in the army, and perhaps it was the army that brought him to Canada. Certainly he was in Canada by 1779, when he hired on as a clerk for John Ross, a minor North West trader who had been included in a temporary North West Company formed in that year. Mackay's wintering ground for that season is not known, but the next year he and Ross were on the Assiniboine River of southern Manitoba. The highlight of this season, for Mackay, was a visit he paid to the Mandan villages on the Missouri, where he was treated, according to his reminiscences, with great respect and ceremony. His actions in Ross's service were clearly marked by a willingness to work hard and tolerate discomfort, but there was also a tendency, undesirable in a fur trader, to a fierce temper which would lead him to deal with delicate situations peremptorily, and often with violence.

In the summer of 1781 Mackay left the North West and went down to Montreal, ending his association with John Ross, and worked for a time as a storekeeper for Colonel John Campbell of the Indian Department. At the end of the war with the United States, Mackay set up a potash manufactory at Pointe Claire, near Montreal, with money borrowed from Colonel Campbell, but found that he could not make a living at this trade, and undertook his fur trading expedition to the Saskatchewan as a way of raising the money he needed to pay off his debts. Colonel Campbell provided the capital for this expedition.

The canoe route up the Ottawa and through Lake Nipissing was straightforward and well marked, but from Grand Portage onward one would need a guide, and Mackay attempted to get one at Michilimackinac. With help from Peter Pangman, who would be his rival, a guide was found, and it was not until they were well on their way that it was discovered that the guide was blind. In the maze of channels that forms the delta of the Saskatchewan River Mackay's party was lost for twelve days, and after they had extricated themselves an early frost sealed them in on a stretch of the river, midway between Cumberland House and the Forks, where few Indians travelled and there was little game. Here they were forced to winter, and here Mackay and his one companion found themselves alone and starving in January.

Better food provides a better outlook, and Mackay's resolve returned when, two days after the Hudson's Bay Company men had appeared with the sleds of meat, six of his own men returned with more provisions and an Indian hunter. His strength returning, Mackay decided to go up the river and try to find the rest of the men. Accordingly he set off with three others, and in four days' time reached Peter Pangman's fort. Here he found four of the deserters, whom he reclaimed and sent off to look for Indians who might come to Mackay's fort in the spring with their furs. Proceeding up the river, he next called on William Tomison, then went on to the Eagle Hills, where William Holmes, the North West Company master, was settled. Four more of Mackay's men were indeed at Holmes' fort, and Mackay confronted Holmes in his own trading room, accusing him of having lured the men away. All we know of this incident is from Mackay's reminiscences, which state that Holmes threatened to beat Mackay, Mackay brandished his sword, Holmes changed his tune and invited the other to a bowl of punch, and in the end the two became so drunk together that Mackay had to be conducted to his bed. Next morning the runaway men were produced, and Mackay set off with the entire group and returned to his fort in triumph.

There was a further run-in with Holmes at the end of the season, which Mackay recounted in pride and great detail in his reminiscences. Holmes tried to draw away Mackay's interpreter by stealing his woman, who formerly had been attached to Holmes' clerk. Again Mackay stood firm, when Holmes sent some bullies to fight him, frightening them with his gun and challenging their master himself to a duel with guns, which Holmes refused. When the rivers opened, Mackay sent his assistant, one James Mackay (apparently no rela-



tion), down to the fur traders' rendezvous at Grand Portage for more goods, while Donald himself went far up the Saskatchewan to select a site for a fort well above Holmes' house.

The Saskatchewan River Indians had been told by Holmes that Mackay was like a bearskin, ferocious on the surface but with nothing inside. Mackay reported that there was an attempt to plunder him soon after he settled his new fort, which he warded off by threatening to fire his pistol into a keg of gunpowder, and blow himself and the Indians to pieces. Having established his courage with this demonstration, he was able to trade with them, and obtained, as he says, four hundred beaver skins. Soon after James Mackay arrived from Grand Portage with the new goods, and the ensuing trading season proceeded with more success than the last. The Hudson's Bay Company built a new post alongside Mackay, at his suggestion — it was intended that the two interests might co-operate, to some extent, against their common enemy, William Holmes and the North West Company. Peter Pangman also built there, and at first was also drawn into the coalition, but Pangman was too independent to co-operate with rivals for long, and the attempt at co-operation came to nothing.

His second season on the Saskatchewan over, Donald Mackay arrived at Grand Portage, in the summer of 1787, to find that arrangements had gone forward, behind his back, which would end his participation in the North West fur trade. As we have seen, there were four separate trading interests in the North West at this time — the Hudson's Bay Company, and the three Canadian enterprises. Of these three the North West Company was the largest and most solidly placed. Competing against it in several regions of the fur coun-

Royal Ontario Museum

View of Montreal, 1784, an aquatint after W. Peachey.

try was the smaller firm of Gregory and McLeod, in which John Gregory was the driving force. Gregory and McLeod had several able wintering partners to conduct their business in the Indian country, including Peter Pangman, and also Donald Mackay's former fur trade employer, John Ross. Then there was Donald Mackay's little operation.

Colonel Campbell, whose money was financing Mackay's enterprise, had appointed one Angus Shaw to act as his associate — it is not known where Shaw had wintered in 1786-87 — and during the trading season Shaw had made some sort of partnership agreement with John Gregory, acting for Gregory and McLeod. Gregory was heavily in debt by this time, near ruin from the expense of the competition in the North West, and doubtless expected that an association with Shaw would strengthen his hand in negotiating a much more valuable arrangement, an outright amalgamation with the North West Company itself. The proprietors of that Company, who believed that only a monopoly could make profits in the North West, were probably willing enough. Then, in the midst of the negotiations, news arrived at Grand Portage that John Ross, Gregory and McLeod's wintering partner in Athabasca, had been shot and killed in a dispute with the North West Company's partner there, Peter Pond. This report sealed the bargain, for it was felt that only an outright merger could stop the violence which increasing competition was bringing to the trade. Thus within a few weeks, in the summer of 1787, arrangements were made to bring all three Canadian interests in the North West — the North West Company, Gregory and McLeod and their partners, and Angus Shaw — into one operation.

Donald Mackay was not to be included, however. He picked up his new goods for 1787-88 at Grand Portage, and shortly afterwards lost one man in a fight with Indians, which he believed had been instigated by Peter Pangman. One day later Mackay was accosted by a gang of voyageurs. He frightened them off with his sword, but that night they took him from his tent, beat him badly, and left him for dead. An old Indian woman helped him back to his tent, where he lay all night. When the gang returned next morning to hide the body, Mackay's face was not too swollen for him to see, and he had recovered enough to hold them off with his pistol. Ever resolute, with the help of one of his men Mackay even managed, he said, to recover his property which the bullies had stolen. It may have been this episode as much as his activities on the Saskatchewan which earned him the nickname *le malin,* the devil, from the Canadian voyageurs. When Donald got back to Grand Portage, Angus Shaw showed him no sympathy, merely scolding him for meddling with the

Canadians. Frustrated at last, Mackay returned to Montreal, convinced that the beating had been ordered by Simon McTavish, the North West Company's guiding hand, and that Angus Shaw had been promised a share in that Company on condition that he get rid of Donald Mackay. It is certainly true that Shaw was taken into the North West Company soon afterwards, and never looked back.

In Montreal again, Mackay worked for Colonel Campbell for room and board, still as a storekeeper for the Indian Department. During the winter, he says, he quarrelled with an Indian, one James White Eyes, who ambushed Mackay on the road. The bullet passed through Donald's hat; Donald returned fire, and the Indian was mortally wounded and died next day. Campbell and the other Indian Department officials suspected what had happened, but no complaint was ever brought about the incident. In the spring of 1788 Mackay borrowed money from Campbell to go to England. An advertisement in the *Quebec Gazette* for 5 June 1788, announced Donald Mackay's imminent departure from the province, and stated that debts concerning "a certain Concern he had in the Upper-country" would be handled by Colonel John Campbell. Mackay took ship in the brig *Maxwell* from Quebec on the evening of 15 June, en route for England.

Still he was hoping to recover his fortunes through the fur trade. In London, as he recounts in his reminiscences, he met with "a set of sharpers there (as I may call them) and come to make an agreement with them to carry on a trade to the North West for seven years." The agreement, with eight partners, including James Mackay, Donald's former clerk, and James' brother John Mackay, was signed on 1 August 1788, and a little over two months later Donald sailed for Halifax in the Falmouth packet boat, accompanied by two of the partners. The packet boat arrived at Halifax on 13 November, too late for its passengers to proceed to Canada by ship, but Mackay determined to take his party overland. Leaving Halifax on the 16th, they proceeded to Annapolis, crossed the Bay of Fundy to St. John, New Brunswick, then made their way to Quebec in the dead of winter, walking along the rivers. Mackay fell through the ice at one point, and had great difficulty in getting out again. The party reached Quebec on 8 January 1789, remained two days, and then proceeded to Montreal. By now it was clear to his new partners that Mackay had nothing to offer the enterprise but his own stamina and determination, and they took steps to attach his house at Pointe Claire, where he had built his potash factory, doubtless in the hope of recovering what had been invested already. Donald Mackay agreed to this, as he puts it, while "in great trouble and vexation of mind". He lived for the winter with a Doctor Meyers, who had leased the house, "and who at this time was my best friend in the country". To add to his troubles, James Mackay brought suit for his wages, owed him for his service as Mackay's clerk on the Saskatchewan in 1785-87.

With creditors after him, Donald did not wish to remain in Montreal. Various schemes floated in his brain, and during the winter he wrote two letters to the Hudson's Bay Company in London (which were received, but apparently not acknowledged), stating that he was intending to take trade goods to the Saskatchewan again, to help William Tomison. As might have been expected, "the Stratagems & Maneouvers of the Canadian North West Company, obliged me to change course", and late in the winter Mackay engaged himself as a clerk with a man called Alexander Shaw, at that time the principal trader into Nipigon, the region north and northwest of Lake Superior. In the spring Mackay accompanied Shaw to Pic River, Lake Superior, where he received an outfit to take to Sturgeon Lake, deep in the Nipigon country. On his way in to Sturgeon Lake for the winter, Mackay wrote a letter to the Hudson's Bay Company's chief at Osnaburgh House, on the Albany River headwaters behind Lake Nipigon, expressing again his desire to enlist in that Company, go to the Saskatchewan, help William Tomison, and get his revenge on the North West Company. His winter at Sturgeon Lake was quiet, for no Indians at all came to trade with him (Mackay believed that another of Shaw's clerks, Jean-Baptiste Turcotte, had lured them away out of jealousy), and he returned to Pic River in the spring with no furs, and with the goods intact. Shaw and his partner were furious, but Mackay's contract was out, and he was free to go.

Now began the second phase of Donald Mackay's career in the North West. During his season in the Nipigon country, Donald had evidently befriended another of Shaw's clerks, one John Mackay — again, not a relation — who had spent his winter in charge of a post on Lake Nipigon itself. John Mackay's contract was also out, and he was no more pleased with Shaw as an employer than Donald was. Together, the two Mackays set off to try to find the Hudson's Bay Company's post at Osnaburgh House. Their trip was confusing and hungry, but they arrived at the post in September, were politely received by the clerk in charge, and were sent for instructions to Albany Factory on James Bay, the capital of the district.

They came at an opportune moment. For years the Company's Albany establishment had been struggling against the encroachments of the Canadian traders, who could enter the Albany hinterland from several points on Lake Superior. The only practical countermeasure which the Company had discovered was to build its own posts further and further up the Albany River and beyond, so as to confront their competitors on the very hunting grounds of their Indian customers. The Company's knowledge of the furthest regions of

HBC Archives

Fort Albany, from the Albany Fort Account Book, 1791-1792.

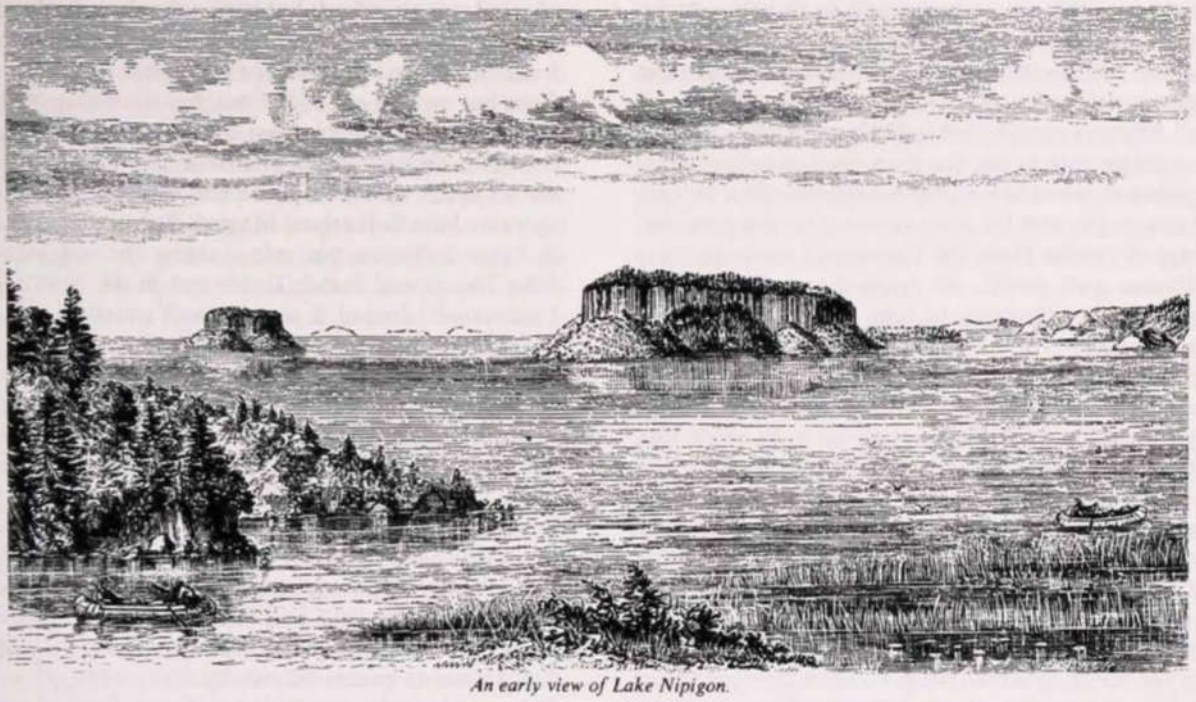
this domain was poor, and it was badly in need of good advice to guide its further expansion. The fall ship into James Bay in 1790 had brought to Albany a certain George Wright Knowles, who had been hired by the Governor and Committee in London because of some previous experience in the Nipigon fur trade out of Montreal. Edward Jarvis, the chief at Albany, suddenly found himself in the fall of 1790 with three former Canadian traders who all possessed first hand information about the country into which the Hudson's Bay Company wished to expand. He directed Knowles and the two Mackays "to form and determain betwixt themselves a plan ... for the conveyance of Merchandize Stores &c and the Method to procure Canoes, Canadians for the Different new Establishments hereafter made". Donald Mackay proved to be the dominant figure in this threesome, and most if not all the proposals were his. The rather long-winded documents which he produced are still preserved in the Company's archives. Jarvis took a somewhat skeptical view at first, but the force of Mackay's personality, and the enthusiasm of his proposals, soon won the Albany chief over.

What Donald Mackay proposed was that the Hudson's Bay Company should establish new posts at Lake Nipigon and Sturgeon Lake as soon as possible; the Lake Nipigon post would have the value that canoes, needed to reach more distant posts to be established later, could be obtained from the Indians there. New posts would then be established at Portage de l'Ile on the Winnipeg River, on the Rainy River, and at Red Lake in northern Minnesota. Osnaburgh House would be upgraded to a supply centre for the more remote posts. Mackay's plan was that four new posts (apparently the five just listed, with the exception of Sturgeon Lake) would be in place by the spring of 1795, with a net gain of furs equivalent to eight thousand beaver skins.

The first step in the expansion was to obtain two canoes of a size suited to the North West trade; these were not obtainable on Albany River itself because of the lack of birch bark and of Indians familiar with the canoe-builder's art. To solve this problem Donald Mackay determined to make a journey in winter to the farthest west of Albany Factory's inland posts, that at Red Lake (Ontario), and then proceed to the canoe-builders' country at Rainy Lake as soon as the navigation opened. He set out from Albany on snowshoes late in January 1791, got to Osnaburgh on 13 March, and continued onwards four days later, reaching Red Lake in a snow blind condition on 3 April. Mackay and his men remained at Red Lake until spring, and set off "for inland" on 13 May. The journal of this expedition has not survived, but we know that Mackay laid out the site for a fort, apparently on the Winnipeg River between Portage de l'Ile and Lake of the Woods, and returned to Osnaburgh for goods in July. These he took to the Winnipeg River to establish a trading post on the site selected, but found that the North West Company had persuaded most of the local Indians to leave the area. With no prospective customers, he therefore returned to Osnaburgh, caching wild rice at various points on the route, and proceeded down to Albany again.

On the previous 29 July, while inland to settle the summer arrangements for the inland posts, Edward Jarvis had written to the Governor and Committee of the Hudson's Bay Company, a letter which was to accompany Donald Mackay's elaborate documents. The letter was long and very optimistic. John Mackay had succeeded in exploring the route from Gloucester House, a Company post midway up the Albany River, to his old station at Lake Nipigon, and plans were made to send him with an outfit to winter there. "He is of an active enterprizing disposition", Jarvis reported. George Wright Knowles had been a disappointment. He had been dispatched on a journey up the Kenogami River to explore a route to the lakes behind The Pic, Lake Superior, where Canadian-based traders were eating away at the trade of the Company's Henley House; but he had got only a short way on the voyage before he had given up and come back. Donald Mackay, when the letter was written, as we have seen was back in the interior trying to establish his post on the Winnipeg River.

"By this pacquet", Jarvis wrote, "I send Mr Donald McKay Journal and Chart the latter is a proper appendix, to the general one, and points out more clearly than we knew before, the rout of the Canadians thro Lake St Anns [Lake Nipigon] to their several posts in the little North, and the communication of Osnaburgh with Portage de l'isle". This journal, and the



An early view of Lake Nipigon.

chart, have disappeared, but they must have been the source of a good part of the information which appeared on a map of the area south of Hudson Bay, dated 1791, which is still in the Hudson's Bay Company Archives, and which in turn was the source used by the London mapmaker, Aaron Arrowsmith, for the waterways north and west of Lake Nipigon on his published map of 1795. Printed maps well into the next century still showed these features, which can be traced to the chart which Donald Mackay drew during his first year in the Honourable Company's service. Indeed, portions of this mapwork were not really improved upon until the advent of the airplane.

Edward Jarvis's last surviving opinion on Donald Mackay is in his general letter to the Governor and Committee which was written on 17 September 1791, just before the fall homeward ship was to sail. "From what we have seen of him, he is a Persevering, enterprising Man, and from the disappointment he has received, seems warmly inclined to benefit the Company's service at the Expence of our opponents; but as to his Skill as a Trader we have not so good an opinion, as we have of his knowledge of the Country, and guiding us to proper Posts." An administrative difficulty was also emerging, since Mackay wished to take his orders only from the chief at Albany, and not from the inland chief at Osnaburgh. This arrangement Jarvis felt to be impossible, and Mackay's proposal evidently caused in Robert Goodwin, the chief at Osnaburgh, a resentment which alienated him from Mackay.

After his setback on the Winnipeg River in 1791, and his return to Albany, Donald Mackay remained there until late February 1792, when he undertook another of his terrific winter journeys inland. He left Albany on 23 February, reached Gloucester House a month later, set off after two days, and got to Osnaburgh on 10 April. The weather was unusually mild, and there was little or no snow for hauling the sleds. At Osnaburgh his men at first refused to go further, but Goodwin persuaded them, and they proceeded on 14 April. Five days later, on Lac Seul, they found *en cache* a canoe which Mackay had left the previous summer, and settled down to fish until the lake should break up. The fishing was poor, and after three weeks three of the four men left Mackay to go to the Hudson's Bay Company little post at Lac Seul. They returned, with others, on 19 May, the lake having opened, and the whole party proceeded to the Company's post in the canoe. Here Mackay found that the Company's master was his fellow clerk from his year with Alexander Shaw, Jean-Baptiste Turcotte (now temporarily working for the Hudson's Bay people), and discovered that "Mr Turcotte has eat the thirty two Gallons of rice I left in his care last fall, on which I was depending on to bring me to the first keg which I deposited for the Spring Journey." His party nevertheless proceeded, delayed at first by ice, and made their way to Portage de l'Ile, and then to Lake of the Woods, where they were well received by the Indians. No fort was built at this time, but some furs were traded, and gifts exchanged. Mackay left Lake of the

Woods on 13 June, and returned to Osnaburgh, his travelling made wretched by dysentery and black flies. Goodwin, who as usual in the summer season was short of provisions, had nothing for them to eat. "Mr Goodwin", Mackay complained in his Journal, "has not give me a single note to get any from the boats, his hatred dispossition towards me is so conspicuous that he cannot conceal it, and for what reason I cannot conceive, except it results from the dictates of envy Jealousy Ambition and pride". It resulted, no doubt, from Mackay's unwillingness to take his orders from the inland master.

Mackay and his men left Osnaburgh for the posts further down Albany River on July 1, and the next day met two supply boats coming up from which they obtained provisions. Late in the afternoon of the 4th, an incident happened which cannot be described better than in Mackay's own words, as they appear in his journal in the Hudson's Bay Company's Archives. The party was approaching the landing place at the top of an obstruction called the lower Snake Fall, when "about twenty yards from the Shore a tree happened to fall into the River on which we got foull which pushed us out into the suction of the fall, in half a second we was Irrecoverable, it was so sudden that our presence of mind was stupifyed; but seeing death on both sides, I cryed to all hands to jump out towards shore, which I did myself but providently my hands got hold of a Rock but my feet got no bottom, but the strong current thro me in on the rock from which I crawled a shore, the water that got in my mouth & eyes which blinded me so much that I do not know how the rest got a shore — John Sutherland Magnas Bersay John Louttit & Louis Jollycour got safe a shore; the unfortunate John Towers and James Taylor was in the boat, when I recovered I looked & see the boat rested on a Rock at the very top of the fall and the poor lads in it, I called to them to thro the tracking line a shore, which John Towers with great presence of mind thro it to us & got a hold of it and fasten it to a tree a Shore, John Towers with great Spirit put himself on the line and made two successful pushes on it, but the third the line broke between his hands and fell in the fall and was never seen again — I believe he was dashed to pieces before he got to the bottom of the fall — James Taylor had hold of the Oar Ring that steered the boat in his hands when the boat went of the Rock, the head was dashed to pieces before the Stem went off — in few seconds we have seen James Taylor fast to a small piece of the Stem of the boat below the fall & cryed

Lake of the Woods by F.B. Schell.

for help, but it was not in our power to give him any assistance as he would be down the next fall before we could Launch and unload the boat of John Richards which was the ony boat in Company, the said John Richards did much exert himself on this unfortunate affair, he ran along shore with a long Pole to try if he could come nigh James Taylor, and at the top of the other fall he got so near as to touch his shoulder but he was so much gone that he had not the sense to take hold of it, he had got two of the bundles of furrs a shore — but if a Canoe was in Company James Taylor & most part of the furrs saved, everything that was aboard was totally lost except this two bundles of furrs, I have lost of my own property to the Amot of Nine pounds Sterling but the Hon^{ble} Hudsons Bay Company must suffer a Considerable loss . . . the loss of two Good men cannot be repaired."

They were unable to find any trace of the men. At Lake Miminisca, the next lake below, were found a keg of castoreum, bits of the boat, and a wooden box which contained Mackay's journal of the expedition. Mackay's own possessions lost included a "Fine Fuzee [gun] bought of Mr Jno Rea Minnories London 1788", "Silver Snuff Box bo^{t} of Mr Daniel Foster Lane London", and perhaps the bitterest, "a large Chart of the North West and the Interior Country corrected with many Rivers & Lakes not published by any who as yet draw, or delineated any Chart of the Country". The party continued downwards to Gloucester House, in fear of their lives for the high, fast water in the river, and got there with no further mishap at midday on 8 July.

The tragedy at the second Snake Fall on Albany River was a turning point in Mackay's career with the Hudson's Bay Company. His efforts continued to be vigorous, and his greatest accomplishment, the establishing of Brandon House, was still ahead of him, but his journals and letters take on an increasing tone of complaint, and a sense of betrayal, while there were more and more incidents of violent disagreement and even fighting with the men under his command.

No Hudson's Bay Company trader was sent to Lake of the Woods in the fall of 1792, a failure which must have done much damage to the Company's credibility among those Indians, after their warm treatment of Mackay the previous summer. Mackay remained at Albany Fort through the fall and winter, but late in the winter set off on yet another winter journey. In mid-March he appeared at Osnaburgh, en route for Portage de l'Ile. One of his men refused to go further "because Mr McKay struck him a blow on y^{e} Head with the butt end of his Gun", and was replaced by another man. Robert Goodwin, still in charge at Osnaburgh, was probably relieved to get the expedition away quickly. Mackay's party appeared at James Sutherland's post at Escabitchewan on the English River on 30 March, remained until spring break-up, and then explored a new route to the Winnipeg River by canoe. He returned to Sutherland's post after this, then spent part of May exploring the Rainy River for a possible site for a trading settlement. No journal for this expedition seems to have survived, but John Mackay, who arrived on Rainy River with a load of trade goods the following September, remarked that Donald had staked out a site for a house near the North West Company's large trading depot (near the site of the present Fort Frances), but found that the depot had long ago used up all the suitable building wood in the vicinity.

At the Albany Fort council at Gloucester House in July 1793, it was decided to send John Mackay to establish a trading post on Rainy River, while Donald was to take an expedition well beyond the scene of his previous explorations, to Red River itself. Donald arrived at Osnaburgh on 26 July, and four days later set off for Red River with three bateaux and nineteen men. The Red River plan, much more ambitious than earlier schemes, probably had been conceived because of the small scope for trade in the Lake of the Woods region, and because of Mackay's previous experience on the Assiniboine River during his employment with John Ross, thirteen years before. Mackay's journal of this expedition, which was completely successful, is in the Hudson's Bay Company Archives, and further information is available in a journal kept by John Sutherland, Mackay's second, and in the journal kept by John MacDonnell, the North West Company clerk at Fort Qu'Appelle for the season of 1793-94.

Barely had the expedition entered the Winnipeg River at Portage de l'Ile when it was overtaken by two canoes of Angus Shaw, Mackay's old partner of 1785-87, and now a partner of the North West Company. Shaw was travelling light, and Mackay, as they passed out of sight, eight men paddling each canoe at full steam, noted the "very stout fellows he had in this two Canoes". Next day the main body of Shaw's brigade, eighteen canoes in all, and headed for the Saskatchewan, passed Mackay, and John Sutherland noted in his journal "We cut but a poor figure alongside of the N W Company's Canoes, they have 6 or 7 paddles and we have only 3 in boats; indeed it appears as if we were asleep." This was, in all likelihood, the first time that the Hudson's Bay Company people of Albany River had been in an outright competition with the North West Company's famous voyageurs. The same company's Red River brigade, under Cuthbert Grant (father of the more famous Cuthbert, the Métis leader), passed on 29 and 30 August. Mackay overtook this brigade three times on the journey down the Winnipeg River and up the Red and Assiniboine, and each time Grant sent a lightly-loaded canoe ahead to make sure that Mackay made no useful contact with Indians. Mackay reached the North West Company post near

the mouth of the Souris River on 7 October and decided to build here; there was also a fort belonging to Peter Grant, a disgruntled former North West Company clerk who was now in opposition to them for his own reasons.

Mackay lost no time in expressing his hostility to the North West Company. Even before he had begun to build his fort, which was to be called Brandon House, he got into an argument with both Auger, the North West Company clerk, and Cameron, Peter Grant's trader, over "running before the Indians", to try and prevent them from coming in to Mackay's post. Less than two weeks later there was a dispute over the cutting of firewood near the Hudson's Bay Company post. On Guy Fawkes Day, Mackay "ordered the men to burn a pope in the face of all the Canadians, this the men did not wish to do so I relinquished my Idea, as it might create some thing of Consequence". Three days later "in the night Ranald Cameron sent an Indian who could speak Stone Ind[n] [that is, Assiniboine] Language to speak and debauch the Indians from me, but I soon put an end to that, I went to the tent & up set his kettle with his Rum". Cameron complained about this the following day, but got no satisfaction. Later, some rapprochement was made between Mackay and Cameron, for Mackay entertained Cameron to dinner on St. Andrew's Day; Auger was also invited, but made no reply.

During the winter, Mackay believed that the North West Company were driving the buffalo away from the houses, to make hunting more difficult. He also believed that Indians were being encouraged to kill him — one Indian tried to stab him the day before Christmas, but was thrown out, and three others attempted the same thing on 24 April. The most dangerous incident had occurred just before this, on 23 April, when Ranald Cameron had told Mackay that Auger had gone out to some Indians who had been given credit by Mackay, to try and get their furs. Mackay lay in wait for Auger with some men, and when Auger passed in his canoe, after dark, Mackay shot, as he later said, in the air; Auger believed that Mackay had tried to kill him.

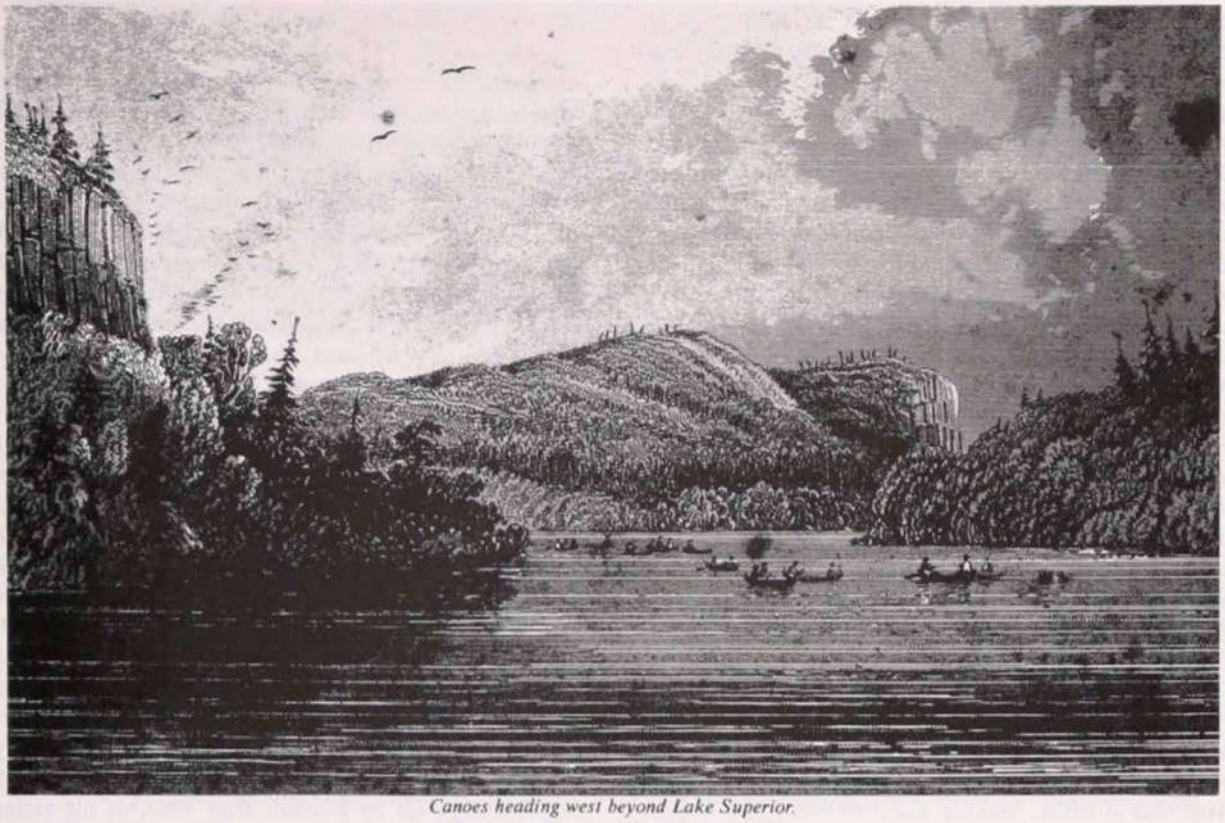
In an attempt to enlarge the theatre of his operations, Mackay had sent John Sutherland up the Assiniboine at the start of February, to build a settlement near the Canadian posts above. Sutherland visited the North West post at Fort l'Esperance, on the Qu'Appelle, where he was received politely, and ended up building alongside Peter Grant at the mouth of Shell River. There was little trade to be had, and indeed the hunt was said by old timers to be unusually bad. Cuthbert Grant himself paid a visit on 25 February, where he tried to worry Sutherland with conversation about how isolated he was. Sutherland stuck things out, however, and left with Peter Grant's canoes on 24 April, arriving at Brandon House on 2 May where he shot off his own thumb in saluting the place.

The day after Mackay had taken his pot-shot at the Canadian clerk, Auger, he got into a fight with John Richards, his half-breed interpreter, who had been drinking with Indians, and Richards went off. Various attempts were made to persuade Richards to return, but with no success — the man in fact did not come back until the following October, when Robert Goodwin had appeared as the new Hudson's Bay trader at Brandon House. "He intends to stay now and mend his behaviour", Goodwin reported with relief, "he lays all the blame on Donald McKay as he threatened to run him thro' the first opportunity they fell out when they was both drunk."

The trading season at Brandon House ended in April, and Cuthbert Grant and his brigade arrived from above on 8 May. Grant had heard, or now was told, about the incident in which Auger had been shot at. Donald Mackay grandly entertained Cuthbert and Peter Grant, John MacDonnell and Ranald Cameron at dinner. He walked back with them afterwards, and Cuthbert, inviting Mackay in for a glass, seized Mackay and kept him confined overnight. Next day Grant tried to extract an apology from Mackay (to no purpose), and suggested that Auger would murder him, but Mackay said he would take his chances, and offered to fight a duel with Auger then and there. On 10 May Grant finally released Mackay; according to John MacDonnell, Mackay had agreed to return to England and report to his employers in person as to what had happened.

John Sutherland agreed to remain for the summer at Brandon House. This was an important step, since the North West Company had been suggesting to the Indians that the Hudsons' Bay Company would not return. Mackay, with his three bateaux, set off for Albany on 19 May, called at Portage de l'Ile on 2 June, where John Mackay and four men were spending the summer after a thin season on Rainy River, and got back to Osnaburgh on the 19th. Here his journal ends.

Donald Mackay had written the Governor and Committee of the Hudson's Bay Company shortly before his departure for Red River, seeking permission to return to Scotland in 1795, and the fall ship into James Bay in 1794, the *King George*, brought a reply granting this permission. This, plus his undertaking to Cuthbert Grant at Brandon House to lay the circumstances of his shooting at Auger before his employers, accounts for the fact that Mackay did take passage on the *King George*, John Richards master, on 7 September 1794. She sailed on the 13th, and reached Stromness in the Orkneys on 21 October, where she entered port to await a Royal Navy frigate which was to escort her to London, in light of the state of war with France. Donald evidently left the ship at Strom-



Canoes heading west beyond Lake Superior.

ness, however, presumably taking advantage of the nearness of his native parish on the mainland of Scotland to visit his family and friends at home. On 10 January the Secretary of the Company wrote him from London, evidently in response to a communication from him: "I am exceedingly sorry that your passage turns out so long & troublesome and much regret you did not travel by land . . . I have perused your Journal and . . . will, without flattery, tell you that I think the Journal does great honor to your Character and will convince the Directors of your Superior Knowledge & experience for pushing the Inland Trade to Red River". A further letter from Mackay must have offered to hire men for the Company in the Highlands, and when, on 18 March, yet another letter arrived, with no further details on what hiring might have been done, the Secretary replied at once: "You will . . . send the particulars of their Engagements for the approbation of the Hon. Committee which must be obtained before their agreements can be conclusive. As to the Insinuations of your being a French spy it is too contemptable to deserve Notice my Letters to you, had you shewn them to any one would have convinced them of the contrary — After the Easter Hollidays your presence may be necessary here."

The flash of paranoia which Mackay's last letter revealed seems not to have been taken seriously in London, perhaps because of an interview which he must have had with the Secretary there in April or May; for the Committee's letter to Albany Fort in 1795 shows that their confidence in him had not been impaired. Speaking of him, the Committee wrote, "The disposition of the latter may, as you observe, appear irritable, but Men who have been used to exert a proper Authority, when commanding those, who perhaps, may have been used to Indulgences, will be looked upon as too severe, until their Dependants, are become accustom'd to observe due Subordination". The Committee evidently intended that Mackay would assume command again at Red River, and instructed that he was to be a member of the Albany governing council; and he duly took ship on the *Prince of Wales*, Henry Hanwell master, from Gravesend on 6 June 1795. She sailed in convoy to Orkney, departed thence on 4 July, and anchored below Albany Fort on 14 September.

The General Letter to Albany which arrived on the *Prince of Wales* had a somewhat scolding quality, and its tone may indicate how thoroughly the Committee had been convinced by Donald Mackay's view of matters. Their irritation with the way of doing things at Albany no doubt had been further increased (as they told the new Chief there, John McNab, in his private

letter) by the behaviour of "some Canadians, now in this City" who "to our great Mortification, cannot forbear ridiculing the Sluggishness of our Servants Inland from your Factory in particular." The ease with which Angus Shaw's stout fellows had glided past Donald Mackay's in August 1793, may well have lain behind this embarrassment. While it was easy enough for the Committee to express its confidence in Mackay in its annual instructions, unfortunately it could do nothing to support him on a day to day basis in Rupert's Land. The outfit for Red River for 1795-96 had left Osnaburgh two months before Mackay's arrival at Albany, and he was given no posting that winter, simply remaining at Albany, apart from a visit to Moose Factory at Christmas-tide. In May of 1796 he was sent up to Martin's Fall, the new inland depot, to organize the inland trade, but had little co-operation from the men, and wrote twice to McNab to complain about his difficulties. When McNab himself got up to Martin's Fall, he found that the men were refusing to go with Mackay to Red River, and another trader, James Sutherland, was sent instead.

Since Mackay had plans to develop at Brandon House, it was felt necessary to send him there, and so he was despatched from Albany with the fall bateaux, at the beginning of September 1796. The water in the river was shallow, making progress slow, and to add to the misery the entire brigade suffered from dysentery. Mackay wrote from below Henley House on 8 September that "that cursed distemper which John Richards brought with him has affected us all . . . I am now deaf and blind with this disorder . . . I am almost dead with the bloody flux." He pushed on to Osnaburgh, which he reached on 10 October, and again the men refused to accompany him further — the immediate complaint was apparently a dispute over the meat rations. The letter Mackay sent to McNab, after this second humiliation, was full of frustration and resentment, and hinted broadly that he suspected McNab of having connived in his troubles. There was nothing at Osnaburgh for Mackay to do, and that post indeed was prepared to provision only a few men for the winter. Mackay tried to make himself useful fishing, and a little later decided to live by himself (though doubtless with his Indian wife and family, whose existence is barely mentioned in the journals) a few miles up Osnaburgh Lake from the post, at a place called the Canadian Path, where the Montreal traders' route from Lake Nipigon reached the lake.

McNab sent a sympathetic letter to Mackay in December, discussing possible ways that Mackay could get to York Fort, where he was hoping still to link up with his old acquaintance from the Saskatchewan River, William Tomison, Mackay could go as far as Lake Winnipeg with the help of Hudson's Bay Company men in the spring, McNab said, or if he got down early to Albany he could be sent by way of the sloop in August 1797. Mackay himself alluded to various schemes, including one to take passage out with Duncan Cameron, the North West Company trader, in the spring. A bitter letter which he wrote from his hut at the Canadian Path on 21 December shows how deeply his paranoia was setting in. Having complained about the shortage of provisions and a requirement that he cut his own firewood — not unreasonable, since he was not living at the post — he again referred to his notion that McNab himself was behind all his troubles. "You may depend on it, that you shall be brought to an account, for the manner in which you behaved to me this winter, contriving to take my life by starvation," he wrote. McNab did not receive this letter until the end of May, and his reply, preserved in his Correspondence Book, was factual and protested only mildly against Mackay's fantastic accusations. By the time that letter was written, however, John Best, the master at Osnaburgh, had got a small canoe built for Mackay by the local Indians, and on 11 June 1797, Mackay set off in this canoe for York Factory, with two Indian women to assist him. One of these women was no doubt his wife, and two young sons were also in the party. "The Men that was appointed by ye Chief ", Best wrote, "would not on any consideration accompany him on account they Said, of his violent Disposition, and bad will towards them." The lake was not yet completely clear of ice.

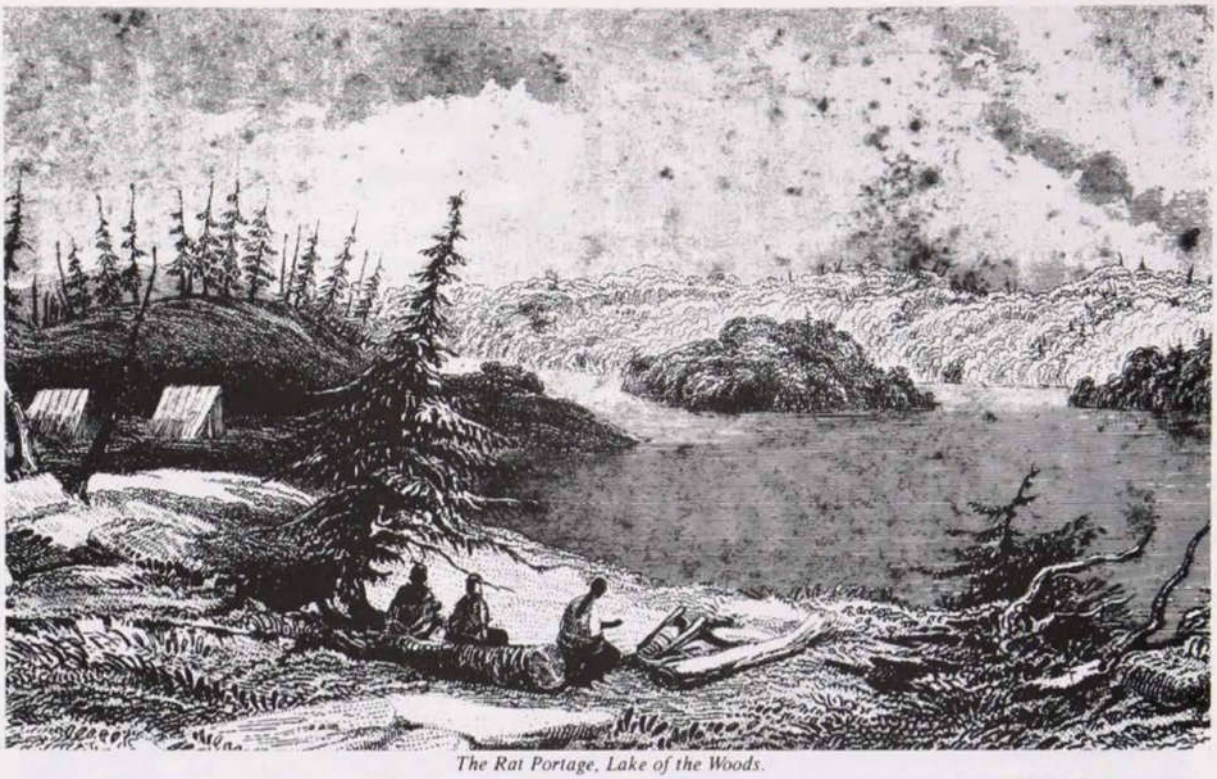
Donald Mackay's progress to York Factory cannot be traced in any surviving Hudson's Bay Company journal, but he would have made his way to the mouth of the Winnipeg River, then up the east shore of Lake Winnipeg to the Company's track, by way of the Hayes River, down to York. He arrived at the Factory on 19 September 1797, having met William Tomison on the 10th on the upper part of Knee Lake. Of this meeting, Joseph Colen, the Chief at York, recorded "He tells me that Mr Tomison did not communicate the least intelligence to him of his appointment on this Establishment". We have no other information about this meeting between Tomison and Mackay, a meeting to which the latter had been looking forward for the better part of ten years. Even through the medium of Colen's pen, Donald Mackay's disappointment can be felt. In a marginal note to this passage, Colen added "at the same time — he informed him that it would be impossible to reach York before the Departure of the Ship which prevented him making that Expedition he might have done." Having missed the chance to return to England by the fall ship, and with no definite duties to perform, Mackay was to pass the winter at York as best he could.

Joseph Colen extended to Mackay the courtesy of his table, as might have been expected, and at first the fall went well. Colen recorded in his journal the

Sunrise on Lake Superior by R.S. Gifford.

details which Mackay had gathered of the North West Company's canoes as they had passed him in the Winnipeg River and the Lake — the names of the clerks, the numbers of canoes, and the quantities of packs of furs were carefully noted. The men with whom Mackay now had to associate at York Factory were a new set, who had never dealt with him before, so that he had a clean slate on which to write. Yet on 11 December Colen notes "Mr Tate set off to build a few Traps & sleep out. Home is rendred uncomfortable to the officers by Mr McKays imperious behavour". The next day Mr. Howse, another of the clerks, asked leave to visit one of the inland posts, while Mackay himself asked to visit Severn Fort — he did not go, however. Early in February 1798, Mackay failed to come to mess for a few days, and then appeared with the announcement that he was leaving the Factory. He set off with his family on the 13th of the month, with two men to take his sleds the first few miles, but refused to accept any letters for Churchill Fort, his presumed destination, and gave no indication of where he meant to go. Over the next few weeks, Mackay continued to live out, and occasional news of him was obtained by Colen. Colen offered to send him to Severn with the packet men when these arrived on 13 March, but Mackay replied with a letter "filled with scurrility and abuse". Further letters of the same kind were received, "and the only reason assigned for such is — on account of my not entreating him to return". On 26 March, accompanied by one Indian and one Englishman, Mackay and his family set off at last for Churchill, "which is a fortunate circumstance for our peace — and we shall again I hope enjoy a little comfort", as Colen recorded thankfully.

William Auld, the Chief at Churchill, noted in his journal Mackay's arrival on 7 April 1798, from York Factory "which he left for reasons of which the Honble Committee wll be the best judge of their cogency, he begs to be entertained here untill the arrival of the Ship & seems determined not to return from whence he came untill that time". No further mention of Mackay is made in this journal. The fall ship to Churchill, the *Queen Charlotte*, under Captain Turner, arrived on 31 August, and Mackay was able to persuade Turner to take him only as far as York Factory again. Richards, the captain of the other vessel to York, the *King George*, also refused to take Mackay back to England. The Company's ship captains, at this period, were under strict instructions not to accept any unexpected passengers from the posts on the Bay, but in Richards' case, it is possible that his decision was influenced by his previous experience with Mackay as a



The Rat Portage, Lake of the Woods.

passenger from Albany in 1794. Joseph Colen's heart must have sunk when Mackay reappeared, but Colen himself had been recalled to England, and John Ballenden, the master at Severn Fort, was left in charge at York. Donald Mackay did send a letter to the Governor and Committee, asking leave to return home by the fall ship in 1799, and to bring his son with him. The request was received in London in due course and approved; but that would be for next year.

After the fall ships had sailed, Mackay first camped out at the marsh near York for a few days, but returned to the Factory on 5 October and was ill for four days, as Ballenden recorded in his journal. Mackay was allowed to live in the Inland Men's House, a building vacant during the winter but used for the accommodation of the men of the inland posts during their annual visit to York in the summer. Ballenden had realized what he was in for by 19 November, when he recorded "Mr McKay's beheaviour this evening gives me no favourable Idea that I shall pass a very agreable Winter with him — Am sorry Captn Richards refused to carry him to England when he was so very desirous to go — His Launcing out into such gusts of passion without the least provication makes me think at times he is deranged in his mind. What I alude to is his demanding a young man who is Your Honours Contracted Servant as a Taylor to wait upon him — He says he is his Servant and has a year of his time to serve him — As I know nothing about Mr McKay, other than his being here a Gentleman at Large, which every civility and attention shall be paid him — I will not submit myself to his overbearing temper — He has always had the Indulgence of a Servant to cut his firewood for him or do any thing he want — My Officers were unhappy with him last winter — and they are no better this, or in the least expects."

A fairly satisfactory way of dealing with Mackay was to assign one of the Factory men to act as his servant, and this arrangement prevailed during the winter. There was one anxious moment on 18 January, described by Ballenden as follows: "At the usual time of Supper this evening I was surprized on Mr. McKay's sitting down to Table hearing him make use of very out of the way expressions. No person making him any answer after sitting some time he got up and retired seemingly much dissatisfied with some person or other. My officers acquainted me he had a dirk by his side and by what he said they were sure he came upstairs merely to quarrel with some person or other at Table". The next day Mackay demanded to have his provisions for the rest of the winter served him, as he had been used with disrespect, and although Ballenden attempted to discuss matters with him, no further illumination of Mackay's complaints emerged. Mackay and his family, with John Moat, the assigned "servant", went trapping out from the Factory on 6 March. Moat was

sent home, as "not being capable to do the duty he wants", on the 20th, and another man, Adam Moat, was sent to Mackay on 6 April. The whole party returned to the fort on the 22nd.

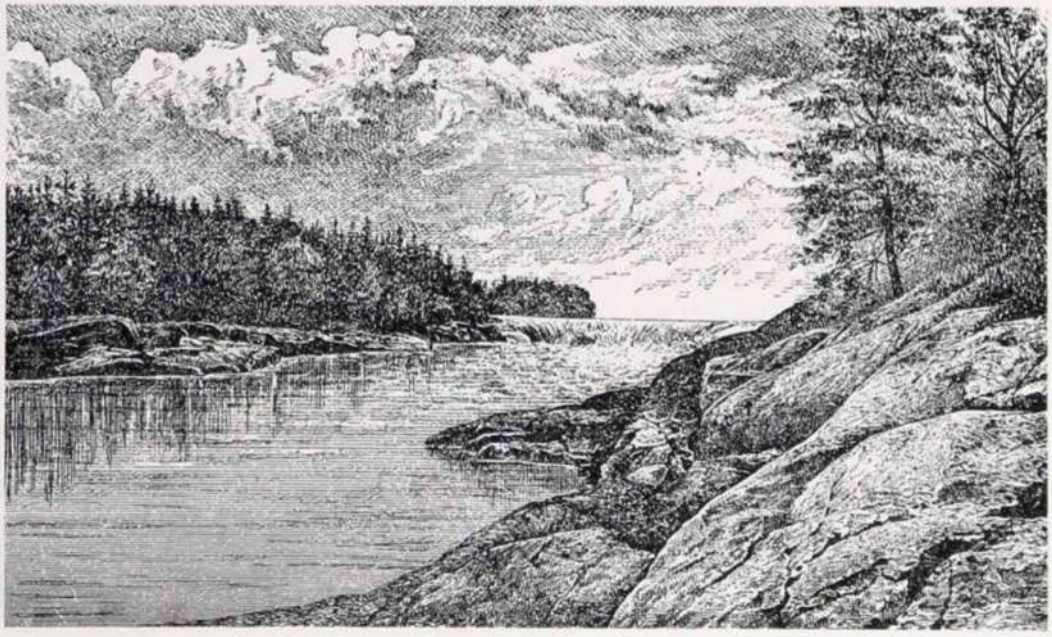
No further trouble with Donald Mackay is recorded until August, when the Inland Men's House had to be used by the extra men who had arrived from the Saskatchewan and elsewhere. Mackay took part in the goose hunt in May, and continued to benefit from the indulgence of a servant. On 4 August Ballenden recorded, "Mr Mckay appears to me to be very much deranged in mind By his often repeating to the People to take warning that he would set the House wherein he lives on fire this Evening, as likewise by perading before his Door with his broad sword threatning he would run the first man thro' that made his appearance. He at present Desturbs the whole Factory." On the 11th, "Mr Robt Longmore on his arrival at the Factory was appointed an appartment near to where Mr Mckay has his — was obliged this morn^{g} to remove from it, on account of Mr Mckay threatning to shoot him — At 5 O clock AM Mr Mckay sent a Man with his Desk Sealed to be delivered to Mr Tomison and to be responsible for the Contents — The People residing in the House where Mr Mckay is, are dayly making complaints of his threatning behaviour."

Later the same day Mackay took his gun and set off towards the marsh. He did not return that night, nor the following day, and parties were sent out to search for him, with no success. Early on the 13th he did return, very tired, with a story that he had been stalking deer, which had led him up as far as Flamborough House, several miles above the Factory. On the 18th in the evening he was again "parad^{g} in the Yard with his Sword & Pistols challenging the Whole Factory to fight him."

The ship *King George* made its appearance at York on 29 August, and this time Captain Richards had instructions to bring Mackay back to England. Doubtless Joseph Colen had told the Committee how important it was to remove him from the country as soon as possible. The passengers homeward that year included William Tomison himself. Donald Mackay came aboard the vessel on 15 September, and Tomison not until the 19th. The *King George* sailed on the 22nd, sighted St. Kilda on 23 October, and anchored in Stromness on the 27th to await the convoy. Mackay probably disembarked there, rather than continuing with the vessel to London.

During the next few years Donald lived in the Highlands, in his native parish of Clyne, at a place called Ashcoilmore, near Kintradwell and Gordonbush. It was probably at this period that he wrote his reminiscences, rather inaccurately entitled "a diary kept in seventeen eighty-five by Donald Mackay of Gordon Bush, Sutherlandshire, Scotland, while in Canada as clerk for the Hudson Bay Company", a copy of which survives in the hands of his descendants. The document he wrote is particularly vivid and circumstantial for the early years of his career in the fur trade, but trails off into incoherent grumbling as it enters the last part of his employment with the Hudson's Bay Company. He may not even have retained a clear memory of that most miserable part of his life.

White Mud Falls, Nelson River.



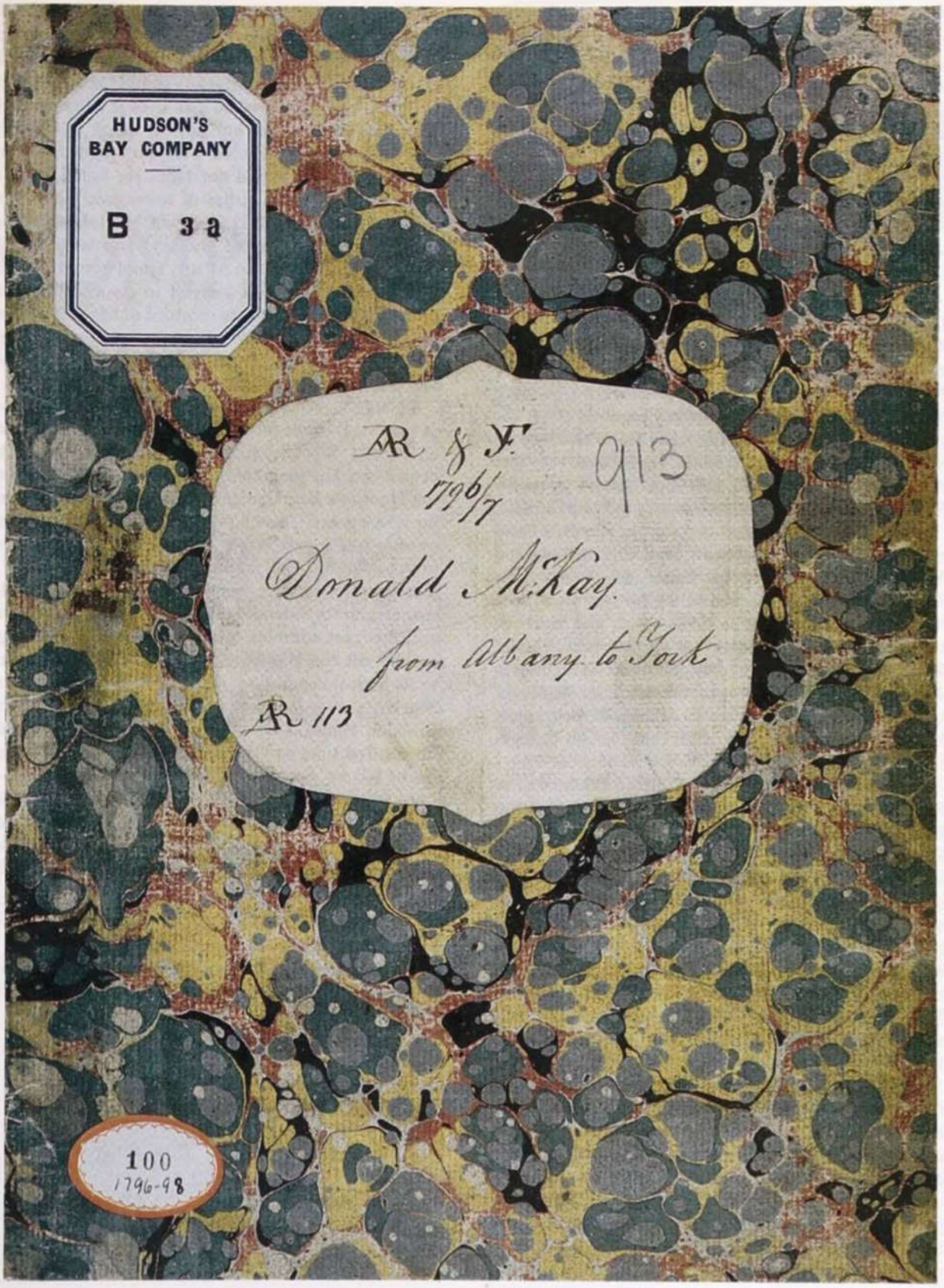
One might have expected Donald Mackay to have been so disgusted with his last experiences in Rupert's Land that he would have sought no more contact with the Hudson's Bay Company. He continued to correspond with the Company's Secretary in London, however, and gave hints from time to time that he might yet return to the North West. In 1801 he arranged with the Company to bring one of his sons from Hudson Bay to Scotland. Early in 1805, when the Company discovered that it would be unusually difficult to hire men for the Bay, Mackay was contacted by the Secretary, and asked to try to procure men in Sutherlandshire. In this he failed, as indeed the Company's other agents also failed, but one year later, after some negotiations whose details are lost, the Secretary wrote to accept an offer which Mackay had made to return as a trader inland from Churchill Fort. Mackay's son was also to be hired. "I need not enter into a detail of the misunderstandings which arose between you & others when you was last in the Company's service," the Secretary wrote. "Let me intreat you 'as much as in you lye live peaceably with all Men.' You will find your acco[t] in it & without it, you can neither be of use to the Company, to your Child or to yourself — I wish you to do well & I will endeavour all in my power to promote your interest & happiness."

When Mackay and his son boarded the ship *King George* at Stromness, they found that William Tomison was also on board. Tomison had retired from the North West in 1803, but had found himself at loose ends in Scotland, and now was going out to Hudson Bay to act as Inland Master from Churchill, at no salary but with a guarantee of a commission or bounty on furs traded at his posts. The *King George* reached Churchill on 10 August 1806, and Tomison and Mackay were sent inland with the usual boat brigade on the 23rd. William Auld, the Company's Chief at Churchill, had known Mackay for a few months in 1798, and wished him to winter with one of his experienced traders, Edmund Raymond, so that he could see for himself what kind of a trader Mackay was. Once inland, however, Tomison assigned Mackay to winter with the young clerk Richard Sutherland, who had only one year of experience behind him. This arrangement Tomison may have made because he thought that Mackay's experience could assist the younger man, but Auld learned later that Mackay had greatly resented the assignment.

An opportunity for more responsible work arose unexpectedly in the middle of the winter. In September, the Hudson's Bay Company clerk Joseph Spence, at Churchill Fort's remote establishment on Reindeer Lake, had been seized by a clerk of the North West Company (now embarking on its last, long, violent struggle with its Hudson's Bay rivals), and forced to sign an agreement not to trade. This agreement, in Spence's view, was binding, and prevented him in all honesty from commanding his post. William Tomison was informed of this, and in January Donald Mackay came up to take over at Reindeer Lake. Mackay repudiated the document which Spence had signed, and did his best to intimidate the North West traders nearby, but the rival company had so many men in the area that few Indians made their way to the Hudson's Bay Company's post. To make matters worse, food was unusually scarce, and Mackay, his son, Spence, and Spence's Indian wife spent most of their time attending to rabbit snares and fishing nets. Spence later told William Auld that Mackay "was a great deal too *violent* with the Natives particularly, and was wholly incapable of taking any charge, fond of liquor when he was quarrelsome and outrageous". Mackay left Reindeer Lake with the winter's trade as soon as there was open water, on 22 May, and Spence followed a few days later; they arrived at Churchill Fort, together with the rest of the inland clerks, on 2 July. William Tomison himself had stayed inland, perhaps wisely, since William Auld was annoyed at Tomison for countermanding his arrangements for the inland traders.

Auld was annoyed also at Donald Mackay and Joseph Spence for leaving no one in charge at Reindeer Lake for the summer. Mackay and Spence countered by making a formal complaint that their trading outfit had contained less cloth than the invoice claimed. Auld decided that the error had occurred inland, after the outfits had left Churchill, and expressed his discontent with Mackay strongly enough that the other took deep offence. When Mackay requested provisions so that he could take himself and his two sons to York Factory, Auld agreed immediately. In his Correspondence Book Auld gave his version of the quarrel, and having recorded Mackay's departure he said, " I acknowledge myself pleased at this for I otherwise must have sent him home as being wholly in every sense incapable of rendering any service to any person or society whatever except perhaps with his head immersed in a freezing mixture he might set off the Clock of a Catamaran." At this time the word *catamaran* referred to a sort of torpedo, whose timing mechanism involved frozen acid, which, as it melted, ate through a restraint and set off an explosion; but it is not necessary to analyze Auld's metaphor exactly to know his opinion of Donald Mackay.

Auld sent off Mackay and his sons with plenty of provisions, as he reported, but almost at the end of their journey they were delayed for six days by a lack of means to cross the Nelson River. What saved them was Indians taking a packet of letters to Churchill, and the Mackays crossed the river in the packetmen's canoe. The officer now in charge at York Factory was John McNab, the former Chief at Albany, whom Mackay had probably not seen since writing the letter



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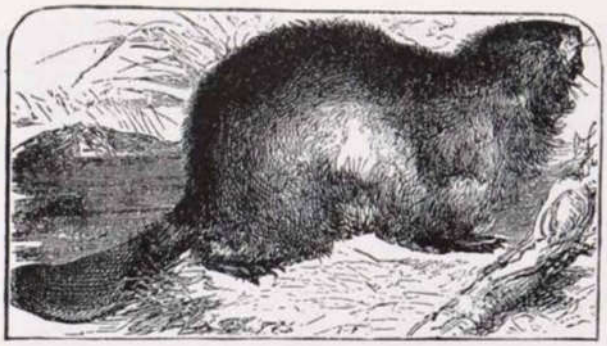

in which McNab was accused of conspiring to starve Mackay at Osnaburgh House. McNab's official journal noted Mackay's arrival from Churchill, "very hungry", on 3 August 1807, but made no personal observations about him. If Mackay inquired about the possibility of work in the fur trade from York, we do not hear of it, and when the fall ship arrived, very late in September, Donald Mackay took passage again for Scotland. Thus ended his sojourn in the North West.

He had fathered at least two sons in Rupert's Land — John, who remained with him in Scotland, and William, who lived with his father in Scotland for a few years but then returned to the fur country. There he pursued a long and successful career as a clerk for the Hudson's Bay Company at various posts east of Lake Winnipeg, dying at Parkdale near Winnipeg in 1887. The boys' mother was the daughter of one of the Hudson's Bay Company's Albany River traders, and it was because of her death that Donald brought his sons to Scotland.

Little is known about Mackay's life in Scotland after his final retirement from Rupert's Land. At some point he married one Mary Mackenzie, and in 1822, when Donald was about sixty-nine years old, they emigrated to Nova Scotia, to the new Kenzieville community. No doubt this migration was in response to the Clearances which were now converting the parish of Clyne and its neighbours into sheep walks. John Mackay, Donald's mixed blood son, came with them, and was the ancestor of Mackays who live at Barney's River, Nova Scotia, today. Donald himself died on 26 June 1833, at the age of eighty. He and Mary Mackenzie are buried in the Kenzieville cemetery at Barney's River.

There is perhaps no figure in the early history of the Canadian North West whose fortunes flowed so inevitably from his personality. Men of great drive and determination were commonly met with at this period, and some of them were fierce and violent, and dismayed their own contemporaries. But Mackay was the prisoner of his own temper, intensified by the insistent sense of pride, and the implacable need to avenge a slight, which all Highlanders had learned as children. This temperament, in his exaggerated version, made it impossible for him to deal patiently and profitably with his Indian trading customers, themselves a volatile and headstrong group by European standards. To this crippling weakness Mackay combined an unsteady ability to lead. He asked no man to bear more hardship than he bore himself, but he was quick to conclude that those he commanded were lazy and unworthy, and this opinion he did not hide. He failed, also, to understand the sensibilities of colleagues: he eventually realized that Robert Goodwin, the Inland Master in Albany River, resented Mackay's insistence on taking orders only from the Albany Chief himself, but by then Goodwin had lost interest in co-operating with him. The bizarre incidents recorded of Mackay at York Factory, in 1798 and 1799, of course must be regarded as the products of a mind now gripped by paranoia and wild imaginings.

Though there can have been few of his associates in the North West who were not glad to see the back of Donald Mackay, his achievements could not be denied him. His geographical knowledge was laid before the Hudson's Bay Company at a time when the need for it was great. This knowledge, moreover, penetrated quickly to the public, for it was evidently passed on to Arrowsmith, the mapmaker, who incorporated it into the first modern maps of western Canada. His enthusiasm for extending the Albany River trade was an important stimulus to the Company, even though he had not the ability to lead the expansion himself to its logical conclusion. Most important, by far, was Mackay's own bold stroke in establishing the first Brandon House, thus bringing the Company's trade for the first time into the valleys of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers. So much history followed from this — Lord Selkirk's choice of Red River for his settlers; the conflict between the colony and the Nor' Westers; and the rash confrontation at Seven Oaks, whose last sad echoes still resonate in the sunny meadow at Batoche — that the name of Donald Mackay well deserves a place in the history of the West. ◆

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COMPANY TOWN

Rugged Stromness in the Orkneys sent many men to the fur trade

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By TIM BALL

In 1799 the Hudson's Bay Company had 530 employees on the overseas payroll, 416 of whom came from the Orkney Islands. Over the decades many others took the long voyage from their island homeland to seek the opportunities that the Company and its distant empire offered. The people of these exposed windswept islands that lie across the Pentland Firth just 9.6 km (6 miles) from the northern shore of Scotland have forged a strong connection with Arctic and Western Canada.

Notice that the word "long" has not been used in this statement because although Canadians think that the three hundred year connection between the two regions is a major part of their history, the same is not true for the Orcadians. A Canadian visiting the delightful Stromness museum is surprised to find that the connection is commemorated in a small display in one corner despite the fact that large numbers of people were recruited from the town and worked for the Hudson's Bay Company, or that for decades Company ships made the town their last port of call for water and provisions.

One does not have to be in the museum long to realize that the 300 years are only a fraction of the history of a region where you can visit Neolithic communities like Skara Brae with its stone houses and stone furnishings dating back over 5,000 years. The visit of three or four merchant ships each year in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries cannot be compared with the influx of Picts 2,000 years ago or the Vikings 1,200 years ago. The last two had a much longer and more indelible effect upon the landscape and the history of these islands, and the visitor cannot crawl through the narrow entrance to the magnificent tomb of Maes Howe without a sense of awe. Driving across the treeless landscape of the main island and seeing the 17 foot sentinels of the Stones of Stenness and other megalithic monuments reminds the resident and visitor alike of this long history.

The southern islands of the Orkney archipelago surround Scapa Flow, one of the best natural harbours in the world. It has provided shelter from the storms that sweep in from the North Atlantic to the west or the bitterly cold winds from Eurasia to the east. The Pentland Firth is renowned for the surging standing waves that are generated by the strong currents from the Atlantic meeting with those coming from the North Sea, and sailors have usually welcomed the calm of this extensive haven. The Royal Navy ships made extensive use of the anchorage in both world wars, but it was not always a safe harbour. The British Grand Fleet sailed from here on 31 July 1916 to engage the German Fleet in the Battle of Jutland. Three years later in the early hours of the 21 June 1919 the van-

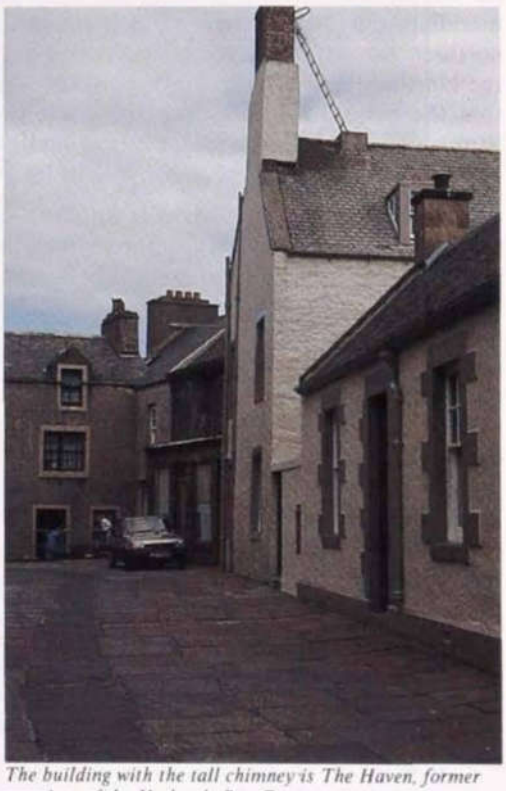
The Ring of Brodgar, an ancient circle of standing stones, testifies to the long duration of human habitation on the Orkneys.

The Pier Arts Centre houses modern art in the renovated premises of Edward Clouston, the recruiting agent for the Hudson's Bay Company from 1836 to 1867.

Scapa Flow from Mainland with South Ronaldsay in the distance. The Hall of Clestrain, ancestral home of the Rae family, is located along the shoreline to the right.

The tomb of Dr. John Rae inside the cathedral at Kirkwall.

Login's Well, a source of fresh water for Company ships and many others. It was sealed up in this century.



The building with the tall chimney is The Haven, former premises of the Hudson's Bay Company agents.

quished German Fleet, scuttled all of its 74 vessels in the waters of Scapa Flow. All but seven of the German ships have been salvaged. Twenty years later at the beginning of World War II the crew of HMS *Royal Oak* believed that they were secure lying at anchor on the quiet morning of 14 October 1939, unaware that German submarine *U47* had slipped through a narrow channel at high tide. Over 800 men died in one of the worst single sinkings of the Second World War.

A walk down John Street from the north end of Stromness, into Victoria Street, along Graham Place to Dundas Street, past the Museum in Alfred Street and out Ness Road to the Point of Ness, is the best way to appreciate the relationship between the community, the Hudson's Bay Company and Canada. Names over the shops and on the sides of commercial vehicles — such as Isbister, Rae, Mowat and Flett — are intriguingly familiar to Canadians, especially those with an interest in the fur trade and the development of the West. It is here in the towns and villages of the Orkneys that the more recent past is found and the visitor seeking the Canadian connection and the presence of the Hudson's Bay Company has more luck. This is not surprising because Stromness has evolved to its present size as a result of providing for many ships that preferred the route around the north of Scotland over the uncertainties of the English Channel. In addition, in the days of latitude sailing when the Atlantic was crossed by sailing along the most propitious meridian, the Orkneys took ships south of the ice of northern waters and north of the strong currents of the North Atlantic Drift. A glance at the map shows that the natural landfall along this route is Hudson Straits and Resolution Island, the first landfall for the numerous Company ships over the decades.

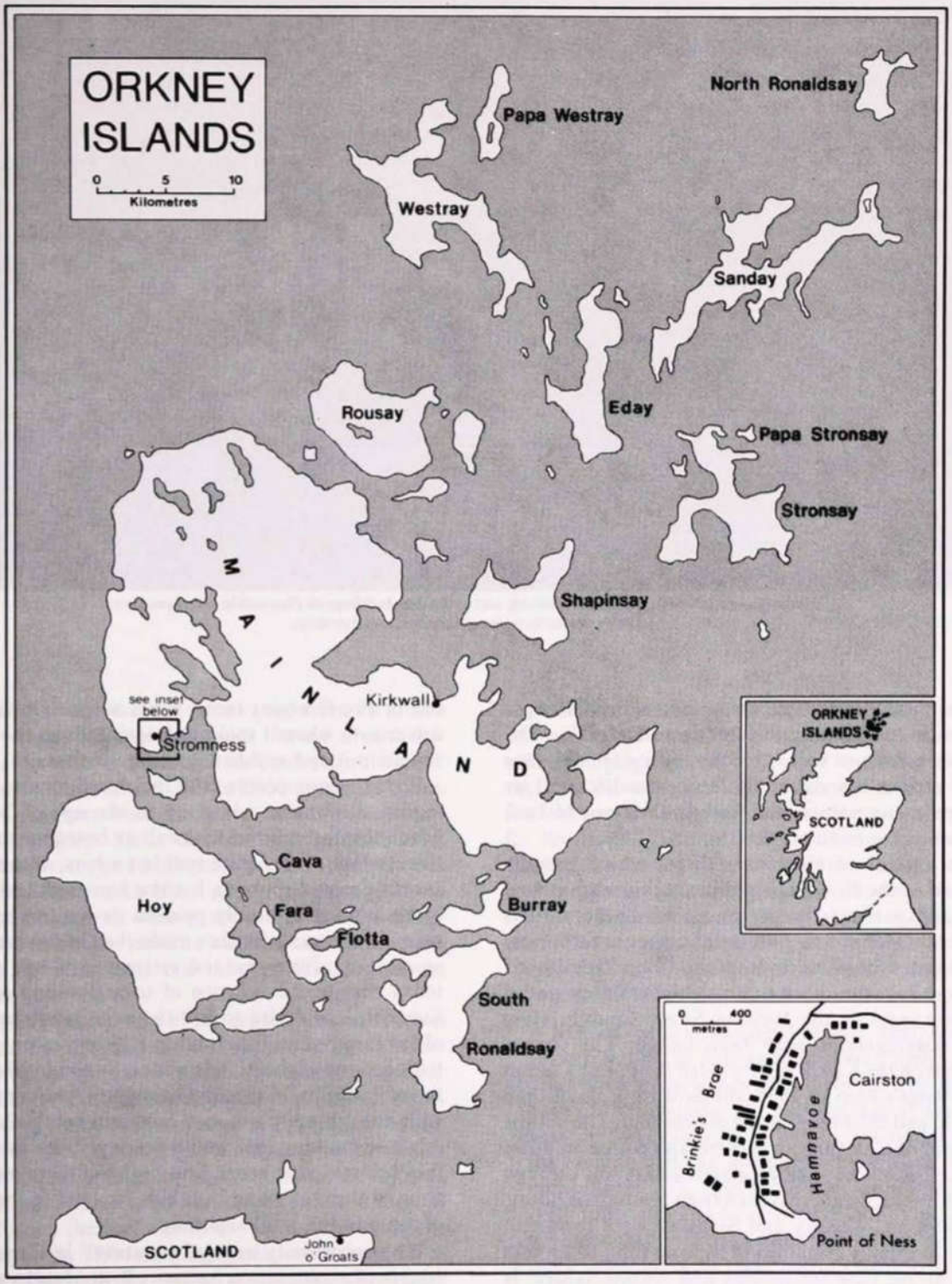
Orkney is an archipelago made up of 67 islands in an area 32.8 km (23 miles) from west to east and 85.3 km (53 miles) from north to south. The largest of these is Mainland on which are located the two largest communities, the capital city of Kirkwall and the smaller centre of Stromness. Located at the same latitude as the southern tip of Greenland and 180 miles further north than Churchill, Manitoba, the islands experience over 18 hours of sunlight in the summer and less than 6 hours in the winter. Despite these extremes the climate is surprisingly mild, thanks to the warm waters of the North Atlantic Drift. However, there are virtually no trees on any of the islands. Alexander Mackenzie the explorer, a native of Stornoway on the Island of Lewes, speculated in his diaries about why it was so much warmer at the same latitude in Europe compared to North America. He thought it was due to the fact that the trees had been cut down, thus changing the climate.

Some believe that there never were trees on the islands, but it is most likely that during the various warm periods, such as the climatic optimum around A.D. 1000, there were extensive woodlands. Hazel trees and roots of large trees at some of the prehistoric sites along with pollen of Rowans (Mountain Ash), Birch and Aspen testify to these more moderate conditions. Clearing of forests during the much colder Little Ice Age period (A.D. 1450-1800), the maintenance of this cleared land by agriculture, and the strong winds that sweep across these northern latitudes are the major reasons why trees are very few and far between today. Some do cling to warm sheltered hollows such as one along the road between Stromness and Kirkwall which is the home of a large rookery. The harshness of the climate during the Little Ice Age was a major factor in the deterioration of conditions that made employment with the Hudson's Bay Company such an attractive proposition.

The town of Stromness is located on the southwest tip of Mainland on an inlet known as Hamnavoe which opens onto Hoy Sound. It provides an excellent deep anchorage sheltered in all directions except from the southeast, which fortunately seldom produces severe weather. The east side of Hamnavoe, known as Cairston, gently slopes down to the water where it is almost connected at low tide to islands known as the Holms. The west side is better suited as a harbour, with deep water close to the shore, but this steepness is an extension of the ridge known as Brinkie's Brae that rises up behind the town, forcing it to stretch out along the main street that runs from the head of Hamnavoe to the Point of Ness.

Catering to the increasing number of ships heading out to the Atlantic and the New World by the northern route apparently began some time around 1590, when an inn was constructed at the north end of the present town. The town started to grow in the seventeenth century and small houses and storage facilities were constructed in the area around Graham Place. A sign of the growing prosperity was the presence of a slater who could provide more permanent roofing than the previous thatch.

The town prospered as the English Channel became increasingly unsafe because of wars with Holland and France and in the eighteenth century the Hudson's Bay Company, which had already been visiting the port, began to recruit directly from the local populace. In 1693 Company ships had been sent to Scotland searching for servants, but the first record of a ship visiting Stromness is in 1702 when Captain Michael Grimington called searching for twelve suitable men. The Orcadians were more than ready and available as their penchant for seeking income and opportunity away from the harshness of the islands was well established. Historian Richard Glover has said that the men turned to the oceans and the lands beyond while the


ORKNEY ISLANDS
0 5 10
Kilometres
North Ronaldsay
Papa Westray
Westray
Sanday
Eday
Rousay
Papa Stronsay
Stronsay
Shapinsay
MAINLAND
see inset below
Stromness
Kirkwall
Cava
Hoy
Fara
Flotta
Burray
South Ronaldsay
SCOTLAND
John o' Groats
ORKNEY ISLANDS
SCOTLAND
0 400
metres
Brinkie's Brae
Hamnavoe
Cairston
Point of Ness

A view of the Stromness waterfront, looking north, showing buildings as they would have been seen during the latter years of the Company's activity.

women travelled to the cities, notably Edinburgh, Newcastle and London, to enter domestic service. The practice continues today, for during a day long tour to the various islands on the ferry from Kirkwall we met two young women who were on their way to London to become nannies.

The arrival of Company ships, which usually occurred in the first week of June, was posted around town and particularly on the doors of the various churches. Until recently all the churches in Stromness were located on Church Road or "The Kirk Road" but these have now been combined into the sole parish church known as the Victoria Street Church. Here three congregations have been united. The former churches on the Kirk Road included the Parish Church of St. Peter's built in 1814, the Scottish Episcopalian Church, and the Free Church of Scotland. The notices of arrival of Company ships were also posted on doors of churches on the various islands and it was through these advertisements that men from South Ronaldsay, Hoy, Rousay, Westray and Stronsay were recruited. The ships usually remained in harbour for 2 to 3 weeks giving ample time for loading and visiting ashore. It must have been a traumatic experience for these young men to travel so far from home and the general tendency for most of them to return to the Orkneys after one or two five-year terms is not surprising. One bus driver with whom I spoke at length had never been off the main island and had no desire to leave.

Today, young people take their preliminary schooling on their home island up to the age of 14 after which they are sent to Kirkwall as boarding students. Some adapt to this quite well but others, according to several people I spoke to, become homesick and return home as soon as legally possible. It would seem that many of the qualities that made the Orkneymen good employees, albeit shy and reticent, are still present today despite the invasion of television and tourists. Similarly, the desire to live the quiet subsistence life of the farmer and fisherman is still very strong. I was told that one of the islands was renowned for the number of "wealthy" Company employees who came back with enough money to buy land and establish themselves, something that would not have been possible if they had stayed at home. The wealth of these returnees allowed them to make high bids for land to the anger of some of the local aspirants.

The opportunity to "make a stake" in Canada has long been an attraction for many Britons and a number of the Orkneymen saw it in this way. There were, however, many who stayed on in Canada and several who achieved status in the Hudson's Bay Company.

The cannon on Stanger's Brae is believed to be from the American ship Liberty captured in 1813. It was used to signal the arrival of Company ships.

The standard contract for most varied from £6 to £10 a year which was supplemented at the end of each five year term with a financial inducement to resign. Tradesmen earned from £20 to £36 a year and many of the Orcadians from Stromness and Kirkwall were in this category. Since the contract included food, accommodation, and a single issue of clothing, it was possible to save most, if not all, of the money. Those short on parsimony were protected by the Company policy of holding salaries in London and limiting the men to spending only one third of the total in the overseas warehouse.

Joseph Robson wrote of his experiences on Hudson Bay in a book published in 1752, providing an interesting argument on the reasons for men renewing their contracts. It must be remembered that Robson was a disaffected employee who provided a great deal of evidence for the critics of the Company, in particular Arthur Dobbs who charged that the Company was attempting, by a variety of means, to protect a monopoly and deny the real wealth of North America to the British people. The following quotes come from a section in which he is trying to explain why many employees renew contracts despite the harsh climate and environment. Acknowledging that the conditions are harsh tends to be counterproductive to his position that the continent has greater potential than the Company is allowing. He prefaces his remarks by acknowledging that ". . . . it must be the last distress that can drive a man to a country, where he has so few chances not only for comfortable subsistence but for life itself." The difficulty with this statement is that it is contradicted by the argument that a considerable number of the men sign on for more than one contract. If conditions are so bad, why would this happen? Robson provides one explanation that can be considered typical of the experiences of a majority of immigrants to Canada.

> It must be acknowledged indeed, that upon his first arrival in the Bay, an Englishman makes a very disadvantageous comparison between the appearance of that country and his own; and it may be a year or two before he is thoroughly reconciled to the climate and the manner of living; but it is an indisputable fact, that those who have staid there their full time, and have lived tolerably under the governor, had rather go back again than enjoy the same advantages in their native country: I myself am an instance of this; and I have heard other captains frequently attest the same of others.

His remarks are about Englishmen who were used

to better conditions and opportunities than the Orkneymen, but the argument is one to which Canadians can relate.

The conditions in Europe in the eighteenth century were extremely difficult, with harvest failures, malnutrition and starvation due to climatic conditions so much harsher than today. Evidence indicates that local ocean temperatures were 5°C colder than at present around Scotland and the Orkney Islands so that the cod fishery was virtually eliminated. Many reports tell us that there was permanent snow on the tops of many Scottish mountains, including the Cairngorms. Severe storms were generated by the southward expansion of ice that increased the contrast of temperatures in much lower latitudes. A very unusual side effect of this climatic change was that several dead Eskimos, who had been hunting seals along the edge of the pack ice in Labrador and other locations, were washed ashore on the Orkney Islands still sealed into their kayaks in the period from 1690 to 1728.

Although money was a major attraction there were other factors that made employment with the Company attractive. The Iceland and Greenland fisheries and the coal trade of the North Sea took some of the men, but were not very popular. They were, however, preferable to the Royal Navy which periodically sent press-gangs to the islands during the wars with France.

Reverend William Clouston of Stromness, writing at the end of the eighteenth century, provides his reasons for men signing on:

> Notwithstanding this, too, yet from a restlessness of disposition, a desire of change, and small as the wages are, yet as they are better than the farmers here can afford to give, the Company always procures a sufficient number of men to go to that bleak climate.

These are very familiar reasons for young men seeking their fortune elsewhere. Clouston also tells us that many people sought to discourage these young men from going by using three basic arguments. "1st The dangers to be encountered from mountains of ice in going there; 2dly, The severity of the climate, and the danger of being frost bit; 3dly, The hazard of being cut off by the Indians". These are arguments that would have been daunting to all but the most adventurous or poverty stricken of the young men.

Much has been written about the characteristics of the Orkneymen and the only thing that emerges from close examination is that there was a great deal of disagreement among their contemporaries. Murdoch Mackenzie, an Orkneyman himself, managed to cover both ends of these perceptions when he wrote in his *Orcades: or a Geographical and Hydrographic Survey of the Orkney and Lewis Islands, in Eight Maps,* published in 1750:

> The Commonalty are healthy, hardy, well-shaped, subject to few Diseases, and capable of an abstemious and laborious life at the Same Time; but, for want of profitable Employment, slow at Work, and many of them inclined to Idleness. In sagacity and natural Understanding, they are inferior to few of the Commons in Britain; sparing of their Words, reserved in their Sentiments, especially of what seems to have a Connection with their Interest; apt to aggravate or magnify their Losses, and studious to conceal or diminish their Gains; tenacious of old Customs tho' never so inconvenient, averse to new, till recommended by some successful Examples among their own Rank and Acquaintance, and then universally keen to imitate; Honest in their dealings with one another, but not so scrupulous with respect to the Master of the Ground; often running deeply in Arrears to him, while they punctually clear Credit with every one else.

It is not known if Samuel Hearne had read Mackenzie's book, but his comments on the nature of the Orcadians seem strangely parallel:

> The Orkneymen are the quietest servants and the best adapted for this country that can be procured. Yet they are the slyest set of men under the sun and their universal propensity to smuggling, and clandestine dealings of every kind, added to their clannish attachment to each other, puts it out of the power of any one Englishman to detect them.

Hearne's remarks were made after the book was published, he was five years old at the time of publication, therefore it seems logical to assume that the remarks are part of a generally held perception of Orcadians. Today we would call it stereotyping. The Reverend Francis Liddell of Stromness, writing in 1797, had a very sanguine view of the relationship between the Company and the men they hired; "[They] hire themselves out for slaves in a savage land, where, in the language of Scripture, they are literally employed as hewers of wood and drawers of water." Was this the first time that this biblical phrase was used to describe Canadians?

The Company began more formalized enlistment of Orkneymen in 1702 and the early recruitment was carried out by ships' captains, but the process expanded as the numbers increased until it became necessary to have a permanent agent. There were only four incumbents in 96 years, indicating that it was a profitable and prestigious position. These were: David Geddes, 1771-1812; George Geddes, 1812-1819; John Rae (father of Dr. John Rae, Company employee and Arctic explorer) 1819-1836; and Edward Clouston, 1836-1867. The offices and residences of these men can still be seen in the town and the visitor is advised to start at the north end of town and walk south along the continuous sequence of streets at the bottom of Brinkie's Brae. Sir Walter Scott visited the town in 1814

A typical crofter's farm on the island of Hoy.

and provided an excellent description of the situation. He complained that the streets ". . . cannot be traversed by a cart or even by a horse, for there are stairs up and down even in the principal street whose twistings are often caused by a little inclosure before the house, a sort of yard, about twenty feet square called a park." In 1821 there were 2,944 people living in houses that were strung along this "principal street" which had a maximum width of twelve feet but narrowed at one point to a mere four feet.

The premises of Edward Clouston, which included a warehouse, have been converted to an Arts Centre. His role of recruiter apparently terminated with the establishment of Canada and the control of immigration by the newly formed country, although the Company continued to purchase provisions up to 1891. As I walked down the narrow streets, dodging the cars that negotiate streets designed for people, I found myself thinking of the many Company people who passed this way. Isham, Hearne, Rae, Colen, Tomison, and of course the "Little Emperor", George Simpson, had all walked here as they arranged provisions, employees and water and made last minute purchases. Did they know that Captain Bligh, master of the ill-fated *Bounty*, had dined here as guest of the Stewarts; George Stewart being a friend who served on the ship during the mutiny of 1789?

Captain Cook's ships of Pacific discovery stopped here in 1780 as they returned from their epic voyages. On board was William Wales, a notable astronomer and Fellow of the Royal Society, who had spent thirteen months in Churchill in 1768-69 to observe the Transit of Venus. He had not been keen to go on that earlier expedition and it is not surprising that he returned to London from this one to settle into a sedate but challenging research and teaching job at Christ's Hospital. The freshwater and produce of Stromness must have been a refreshing welcome and beginning to the balance of his life.

The other famous expedition that passed through in 1845 and collected similar refreshments was that led by Sir John Franklin. Unfortunately, they were heading to disaster. Ironically, it was an Orkney man, Dr. John Rae of the Hudson's Bay Company, who led searches for the missing men and eventually learned to some extent what had happened. The Rae family had originally been farmers with holdings on the shore of Scapa Flow in a delightful house known as the Hall of Clestrain that is still standing, but is now used for storing hay, a use that the pragmatic Rae would probably approve. The family moved to Stromness and occupied the building known as The Haven which had been previously occupied by the Geddes family; this means that it is probably the building with the longest

association with the Hudson's Bay Company, from 1771 to 1836. The house remained the property of the Rae family after Edward Clouston moved the operation to his own property further north on Victoria Street. The Haven is now the home of the manager of the Northern Lighthouse Depot which serves and maintains the lighthouses of northern Scotland, Orkney and Shetland.

Dr. John Rae, who retired from the HBC early at the age of 43 in 1856, went back with his "stake" and bought land at Westhill in the Orkneys, as so many others had done; unlike them, however, he divided his time between this estate and a home in London. He died in 1893 and is buried in the cemetery of the splendid St. Magnus Cathedral, Kirkwall, in a grave marked with a small three-tiered base topped by a simple stone cross. Inside the cathedral is a magnificent tomb with a life-sized statue of the explorer asleep in full dress and wrapped in a buffalo robe, lying on top of a large rough sculptured block of the local stone. This seems very appropriate for he must have spent many nights sleeping on top of the bare rocks of the Arctic exposed by the effects of glaciation. It is a fine memorial but remote and rarely seen. On the west side of Alfred Street, just south of The Haven, there is a modern housing project named Rae's Close in honour of this native son, but he deserves more credit in the annals of British exploration than he has received.

The Stromness Museum is located at the corner where Alfred Street widens to one of the "parks" that Sir Walter Scott remarked upon, and then continues towards the Point of Ness with the new name, South End. Founded by the Orkney Natural History Society in 1837, it has been at this location since 1858. It is a fascinating place with exhibits of local history, geography, natural history and excellent photographs of the early days of whaling and fishing. In one corner are the artifacts and materials relating the brief interlude of the Hudson's Bay Company. Excerpts from Company logs and other papers give some idea of the connections with Canada. Part of the display relates to Dr. John Rae's search for the Franklin expedition and includes a surprise artifact, one of the Halkett rubber inflatable boats that Rae took with him to cope with the shallow lakes, frequent rivers and streams, and floodwaters of the summer melt. The boat was designed by Lieutenant Peter Halkett of the Royal Navy and was constructed of a very heavy material coated with rubber which could be rolled up and carried as a back-pack. Rae referred to them as "Halkett's admirable little boats".

The most important item on a sailing ship was the supply of fresh water and normally it was the last thing put on board to ensure maximum freshness. The stop in Stromness was the ideal point at which to fill the barrels before setting out across the Atlantic, and Login's Well, located at the south end of town, had excellent water. The rain falls on Brinkie's Brae and is filtered through the soil and rocks of the steep slopes to the harbour below. Login's Well, dug into this underground flow, has been sealed since 1931, but the visitor can peer through the glass door into the damp, fern and moss covered interior where the dark waters are still visible. The site is well marked with a large plaque commemorating the many ships and expeditions that have enjoyed the refreshing waters. The top line of the plaque reads, "There Watered Here the Hudson Bay Coy's Ships 1670-1891".

There were usually two ships setting sail from London in June expecting to rendezvous off Resolution Island at the entrance to Hudson Strait. Sailing out of the Thames estuary from Gravesend the ships navigated the shoals and choppy waters of the North Sea, and the standing waves of the Pentland Firth before entering the relative calm of Scapa Flow. Passing Brough Ness at the southern end of South Ronaldsay, the ships entered Scapa Flow through the Sound of Hoxa with the island of Flotta on their port side. This island is very important today as the terminal of the oil pipeline from the extensive North Sea reserves and is a major source of jobs and income. The high hills of Hoy provide shelter from the west winds but they also funnel the winds so that it probably meant that most ships approaching Stromness tacked past the small islands of Cava and Graemsay.

Their arrival was of great importance and was signalled after 1813 by the firing of the cannon purportedly taken from an American privateer named the *Liberty*. The cannon sits in the same place today surrounded by the grass of another small park and attended on each side by benches. Appropriately, just as this part of town welcomed the ships, it also was the place of farewell. South End changes to Ness Road just beyond the cannon and leads out to the Point of Ness, where families gathered for the last glimpse of the ships as they navigated through Hoy Sound to the open ocean and on to Canada.

The importance of Stromness to the Hudson's Bay Company is told in the services that were provided and the people who left the security of the stone buildings for the wood and wilderness of the vast lands of Canada. Her sons, and the sons from most of the other islands, served the Company in their stoical and traditional manner providing the traditional skills of fishing, sailing, ship building, rope making and hard work. They withstood the rigours of the Canadian winter better than most and although some of them achieved considerable status with the Company, most served long enough to allow them to secure their own place on the islands that they loved. ♦

Tim Ball is Professor of Geography at the University of Winnipeg and a director of the Rupert's Land Research Centre.

Sir Arthur At War

By Robert Saunders

GENERAL SIR ARTHUR CURRIE
A Military Biography
By A.M.J. Hyatt. University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1987. 178 pp., illus. $24.95.

Daniel G. Dancocks' biography of Sir Arthur Currie deserved the high acclaim it received when it was published in 1985 for it was well-researched and was written in clear, vigorous prose. Its chief fault was that it presented Currie as a man with few, if any, faults or weaknesses and as a soldier who, in Mr. Dancocks' words, "compiled a record . . . few other military commanders have achieved in any war."

Mr. Hyatt's book is more balanced. It is evident that Currie was a decent, brave, sensible man, but Mr. Hyatt is also aware that he could at times be pompous, vain and petulant and that the financial trouble he got himself into over the use of regimental funds in 1914 showed, at the very least, a serious lack of judgement.

Mr. Hyatt is a professor of history at the University of Western Ontario with a special interest in military history and his book is primarily an assessment of Currie as a military leader. Sir Arthur was not a professional soldier, although he had served in the militia before the war, but he proved to be an exceptionally able and competent commander. He had no use for the muddled improvisation that too often passed for strategic thinking in the First World War and which resulted in such appallingly high casualties. Sir Robert Borden recorded in his diary a conversation he had had with Currie in London early in 1918. Borden wrote that Currie had given him "an awful picture of the war situation among the British. Says incompetent officers not removed, officers too casual, too cocksure." These were never Currie's faults. He was renowned for his careful preparations before every battle.

Sir Arthur issues orders, June 1917.

If thoroughness and foresight are enough, then Currie was a great commander. But are they enough? They won for Currie the respect of his troops but not their affection. In his book *Generals and Generalship*, A.P. Wavell — who resembled Currie in some ways — asked the question: "Does it matter to a general whether he has his men's affection as long as he has their confidence?" He went on to say: "He must certainly never court popularity. If he has their appreciation and respect, it is sufficient. Efficiency in a general his soldiers have the right to expect; geniality they are usually right to suspect. Marlborough was perhaps the only great general to whom geniality was always natural."

Wavell wrote that on the eve of the Second World War. It may have been true of the regular, professional armies of an earlier period, but it certainly did not apply to the mass armies of democracies comprised of reasonably well educated men serving "for the duration". The best leaders understood that hearts must be won as well as heads and this, as much as anything else, accounts for the calculated histrionics of commanders such as Montgomery, Mountbatten and MacArthur.

There was none of this theatricality in Currie's makeup. This is, in some ways, to his credit, but it may have made him a less effective leader. A good example of his failure to understand the thinking of the average soldier was his once-famous Order of the Day in which occur the words: "To those of you who will fall I say, You will not die

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but step into immortality. Your mothers will not lament your fate but will be proud to have borne such sons." However elevated these sentiments may be judged to be, it was ridiculous to expect young soldiers to respond to them with anything but derision.

If Currie lacked the common touch, he had other, far superior, qualities. Siegfried Sassoon has some bitter verses about a genial old buffer of a general. The last lines are:

"He's a cheery old card,"
grunted Harry to Jack
As they slogged up to Arras
with rifle and pack . . .
But he did for them both
with his plan of attack.

Currie's plan of attack was never slipshod. It was always thorough and careful and many Canadian lives were saved as a result. The butcher's bill on the western front was terribly high, but without Currie's leadership, the casualties would have been even worse than they were. Many Canadians survived the war and lived on to old age because of Currie. Weighed against this, a touch of pomposity and a lack of showmanship seem very small matters.

Mr. Hyatt's book is both scholarly and readable — a combination of qualities that is all too rare. It is the latest in the excellent series of Canadian War Museum historical publications.

Robert Saunders of the Winnipeg Free Press has written extensively on generals and generalship.

Scientist of Warfare

By Jeffrey Anderson

PROFESSIONAL SOLDIER
General Guy Simonds — A Memoir
By J.S. McMahon. McMahon Investments Ltd., Winnipeg, 1985. 87 pp., illus.

It's probably true that once the tumult and clamour of battle is over, Canadians as a nation are prone to forget what is owed their captains of war. This short, privately printed memoir of one of Canada's finest field commanders, General Guy Simonds is written to fill a void: for there is no full account of Simonds' military exploits. This is then an interim narrative written by a Winnipeg businessman, a former serving officer and school chum of Guy Simonds.

Canada's military history is certainly incomplete without a detailed account of Simonds' contribution to this country's effort during the Second World War. In a note at the beginning of this memoir McMahon says, "Someone should write the Guy Simonds story." So far, no one has. Simonds himself projected and apparently nearly completed an account of his life and war time experiences, but they remained incomplete and unpublished at the time of his death in 1974.

In those histories of the Second World War which bother to concern themselves with the Canadian contribution, Simonds is repeatedly referred to as Canada's most competent and respected general. At most there are only one or two names that can be uttered in the same breath as his. He had something of Montgomery's flair and attitude to war and perhaps something of his passion for logistics and imaginative strategic initiatives.

One important fact brought to light by the memoir is that Simonds had been chosen by Montgomery to witness the opening phases of the North African offensive at El Alamein. For all his egocentric manner Montgomery did appear to have a good nose for choosing excellent subordinate commanders — Horrocks, Dempsey and Oliver Leese spring to mind — but, like all mortals, Montgomery was far from infallible. In his recent and excellent book concerned with the Battle of Normandy, *Overlord,* the British writer Max Hastings described Simonds as "one of the outstanding leaders of the campaign" — a dour, direct, clever gunner (Simonds was commissioned in the R.C.H.A.) upon whom Montgomery increasingly relied. At the Falaise Gap, especially, Simonds distinguished himself by his unorthodox methods — the use of improvised armoured personnel carriers and employment of nighttime armoured attacks.

The initial chapters are devoted to Simonds' and the author's schooling at the Royal Military College at Kingston. Academically, Simonds was alert and accomplished, usually the leader of his class. He was not, however, much of a team player, especially in sports such as football and hockey, but excelled in individual sports like track and field.

Simonds was born in England and received his early education there. The author several times refers to Simonds' clipped "Oxford" accented speech, when he probably means public school accent. Simonds as a young person probably never went near Oxford.

In relating various anecdotes about Simonds and the major engagements in which he took part McMahon leans heavily on a number of famous books on the war, including the previously mentioned *Overlord* by Max Hastings, *Caen, Anvil of Victory* by Alexander McKee, *Gauntlet to Overlord* by Ross Munro and *The Struggle for Europe* by Chester Wilmot.

About Simonds' four years at RMC the author makes a number of curious statements, doubtless said in deference to the conceit of his friend Simonds; one such remark is that "Egotism is a mark of leadership". No question then that Simonds thought well of himself and "he was never an overly generous man either of his time or his income. Nor was he tolerant of faults he per-

ceived in others." But, there are plenty of examples where egotism is not necessarily the hallmark of a great military leader — Slim, Wavell, Auchinleck, Dempsey, even Alexander spring to mind.

McMahon has written simply and tellingly of Simonds' early life and his ascent eventually to Chief of the General Staff. An old soldier's attempt to do justice to the memory of a former comrade; the book is always interesting, if unpretentious, with a goodly amount of personal information about its subject. A few of the maps are rather crudely drawn; the one of Sicily and southern Italy fails to include Syracuse, although it is mentioned in the text.

Several observers have likened Simonds to Montgomery, both in style and idea. There certainly were similarities in their makeup. Brig. Elliot Rodger could say of Simonds "Never have I worked with anyone with such a precise and clear and seeing mind — he was always working to a plan with a clear cut objective which he took care to let us all know in simple and direct terms. He reduced problems in a flash to basic facts and variables." Simonds had a truly remarkable career; he approached the problem of battle like a scientist, much like his mentor Montgomery, but, as McMahon points out, both were perfectionists. If Montgomery was principally an expert implementor, Simonds was a radical innovator with an original cast of mind.

"Ambitious, reserved and ruthless," the author says of Simonds, he was not an easy man to serve, for he was intolerant of minds less capable than his own. Nevertheless, he certainly commanded confidence and respect.

There's a lot to be said for the notion that in battle, especially, serving a military egocentric who knows his job is doubtless preferable to serving under a more affable personality, who doesn't.

Jeffrey Anderson teaches journalism at the University of Western Ontario, London.

Down To Business

By J.M. Bumsted

NORTHERN ENTERPRISE
Five Centuries of Canadian Business

By Michael Bliss. McClelland and Stewart, Toronto, 1987. 640 pp., illus. $39.95.

WHALERS NO MORE
A History of Whaling on the West Coast

By W. A. Hagelund. Harbour Publishing, Madeira Park, B.C., 1987. 211 pp., illus. $24.95.

EMPIRE OF DUST
Settling and Abandoning the Prairie Dry Belt

By David C. Jones. The University of Alberta Press, Edmonton, 1987. 316 pp., illus. $24.95.

SPILSBURY'S COAST
Pioneer Years in the Wet West

By Howard White/Jim Spilsbury. Harbour Publishing, Madeira Park, B.C., 1987. 272 pp., illus. $24.95.

The decade of the 1980s has unquestionably been an age of exceptional entrepreneurialism, not merely in Canada, but around the world. Cuddly "ET" has been replaced by nasty Wall Street brokers as the dominant Hollywood type, and the hustle is what life is all about for those born into the era of post-prosperity and limits to growth. As Michael Bliss points out in his monumental study of the history of Canadian business, hustling has always been necessary to make things go in the Canadian environment. Insofar as this work has a central theme, it is less the importance of the public sector so often emphasized by previous writers than the continued presence of private entrepreneurialism in Canadian economic development. Hustling has never been easy, Bliss suggests, but for Canadians it has always been necessary.

Given the current public controversy about "popular" versus "academic" history, it is probably worth emphasizing at the outset that Bliss's book shows very clearly its academic bloodlines. *Northern Enterprise* is an excellent example of the best kind of academic approach to the general reading audience, for it is unfailingly interesting and written in a lively prose style that can hardly avoid engaging the reader. At the same time, this work lacks the telltale marks of the popular historian. It does not have simple (and teleological) themes, but rather consists of an interwoven web of complex developments. It doesn't break into the story at the most interesting point, but begins at the beginning and carries on across the centuries in a fashion almost textbook-like in its coverage. It does not sacrifice stories that illuminate the larger points being made.

By and large, Bliss succeeds in integrating anecdote and interpretation, and presents to the reader a host of little-known Canadian businessmen and entrepreneurs. In his earlier chapters he has certainly benefited greatly (and acknowledged accordingly) from the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography,* and this is among the first of what one suspects will be a fair number of syntheses relying heavily on the *DCB* for its human interest.

However a popular historian might manage this material, Bliss has done his best to provide a general historical context for his businesses and businessmen. At times, indeed, the context threatens to take over the text, turning it into a general economic history of Canada rather than a study of Canadian business. Nowhere is the author terribly precise about what is the difference between economic

history and business history, but his coverage suggests that apart from perspective, one distinction is that farmers and small producers are not as important to Canadian business history as they might be to its economic history. On the other hand, although Bliss devotes a good deal of attention to financial manipulations, the reader of this work will come away with no clear idea of how the big boys do it — or did it. Max Aitken's trust consolidation is discussed but not described. To some extent, the problem is in the secondary literature. There is not really a single work on a Canadian entrepreneur that offers the nuts and bolts details of, say, Forest Macdonald's biography of Samuel Insull, the American utilities magnate at the turn of the century. This book is limited by the secondary literature in a variety of ways, most of which are quite fairly identified by the author in his sections on sources. Its centralist bias is probably inescapable, given the financial realities of this country. But readers should be aware that there are other things happening out there in the regions, and other questions to be asked on such topics. I would have liked to have seen Bliss deal with the implications of centralism on entrepreneurs along the peripheries. Do the Irvings and Sobeys emerge despite the system, or because of it? But given the vastness of the subject, even as large and comprehensive a book as this one is cannot hope to explore every topic. Readers will learn a good deal about the development of business in Canada from this very superior volume.

But not everything. Fascinating detail on some of those areas of Canadian business not given much attention by Bliss is provided by a number of other recently published works. None are as wide-ranging, but all fill in some of the cracks in the record, especially in the outer regions of our vast country. In *Whalers No More,* W. A. Hagelund follows the twentieth-century history of the whaling industry in British Columbia to its demise in the early 1970s. Between 1905 and 1972, more than 30,000 whales were taken in the Pacific Northwest. The industry was always a marginal one at best, and was eventually destroyed by a combination of the obsolescence of the product and its destruction through overharvesting. Hagelund emphasizes that whaling was never "the pursuit of the well-found, wealthy, or complacent," but rather "the pursuit of the very poor, the very hungry, and mostly, the very desperate men" (p. 1). He offers some illustration of this crucial social reality through an autobiographical account of his own early experiences as a whaler, but the book gradually turns increasingly anecdotal in nature, ultimately degenerating into little more than "good whaling stories I have heard". Some of the early pages do capture, however, the difficult working conditions, the desperation, and the occasionally exhilarating adventure of those who sought the whales. Hagelund's business "entrepreneurs" are a fairly sad lot of men desperately trying to keep a dying industry alive, although a few figures (like William Schupp) occasionally made large profits through austere measures. Neither the businessmen nor the whalers themselves are terribly successful romantic figures, but as anti-heroes they afford a useful corrective to any tendency to wholesale romanticization of Canadian business activity.

Even less dashing than Hagelund's whalers are the farmers whose lives are limned by David C. Jones in *Empire of Dust.* Between 1905 and 1913, thousands of farmers, most of them experienced, settled in the "Last Best West" of Alberta and Saskatchewan. Unfortunately, much of the land put under the plough in these years was part of the prairie dry belt. Jones focuses on the rise and fall of this dry belt region, concentrating particularly on one modern ghost-community in eastern Alberta called at various times Carlstadt or Alderson. His story is one of lucky boom (before 1914 there was enough moisture for successful farming) and gradual bust (a twenty-year process of disaster and disintegration in which the Depression played only a small part). Jones reminds us that the problems of western farmers did not begin yesterday, but have a long background throughout the twentieth century.

As does Bliss, David Jones walks the fine line between academic and popular history. Jones ends up more on the popular side, for his themes are fairly simple and he does not attempt to surround his tragic tale with overmuch complexity. The region was simply not suited to dry-farming, he insists, despite the efforts of the experts to persuade the farmers that they could get decent crops with proper techniques and procedures. The early boom soon foundered on the realities of moisture. There are no villains here, but the boys at the experimental farms who sold the farmers a bill of goods come close. And there are no heroes, although probably the figure in the book most sympathetically portrayed is a Nova Scotian named Lindsay Thurber, who ran the Berry Creek School Division with ingenuity and panache in the disastrous years of the 1920s and early 1930s.

Presumably the region was in such a state of decline by the mid-thirties that not even William Aberhart could galvanize it into action; neither Aberhart nor Social Credit figure in this book, although one would have thought that the drybelt would at least be fertile ground for politicians with quick fixes. Jones becomes fascinated, almost fixated, with decay and deterioration, leading to passages such as the following, describing a brief royal visit of 1939:

> Down the track the train roared, like a car blaring through a windswept cemetery, its crosses down, its tombstones strewn about. Guests aboard from king and queen to chefs and valets knew they were passing through bad country, the worst of the prairie, and if they could not bear to look upon it, it was because their minds were necessarily on destinations of significance. It is doubtful if any sensed that embedded in the bleakness and disarray of the moonscape around them was the profoundest tragedy imaginable (p. 248).

Jones's farmers are innocent victims, and his tale is one of

misinformation (occasionally willful) rather than of self-delusion, frequently unintentional. But for the farmers and businessmen of the prairie dry belt, as for the whalers of the Pacific Coast, there was little to look forward to after 1919.

After hundreds of pages of human disaster, it is more than a bit exhilarating to turn to the cheerful and bumptious world-view of Jim Spilsbury, "as told to" Howard White (the details of the collaboration are not clear from the book itself). *Spilsbury's Coast* is probably the least consequential of the books under review here, but easily the most fun to read. In the first place, Jim Spilsbury's family (especially his parents) were true eccentrics in the finest tradition of the British upper classes, operating in British Columbia on the verge of the remittance man society. Father packed in his Cambridge education to take a small legacy to the B.C. frontier, where he met Mother visiting from England at Fort Langley. The couple were pioneer farmers at Whonnock, up the Fraser Valley, but when Father became ill with rheumatic fever, they moved in 1914 to a tent on Savary Island, where the family remained for thirty years. The tent was gradually improved to the point where its canvas served more as wallpaper than as walls, but the Spilsburys led the good life. Father read in his easy chair (wearing his Cambridge blazer), while Mother (who was an exceptionally good sportswoman) kept the family supplied with fresh meat. Only shooting on the wing was allowed.

After some apprenticeship in marine radio, Spilsbury turned to radio repair in remote coastal communities in his own boat. He gradually became involved in two-way radio, then airplanes. By 1946 he headed Canada's third largest airline, selling out in 1955 and returning to low-power radio manufacture. At least in retrospect, his business successes are less important to Spilsbury than his love affair with coastal British Columbia, and most of the book concentrates on the early years of struggle. The account of Spilsbury's life as a radioman on the coast in the 1930s is fascinating, indicative of what someone with imagination and ability could achieve on the furthest margins of entrepreneurialism. Spilsbury was able to combine his love for the remote B.C. coast with business success by moving into communication and transportation, two areas obviously important to isolated communities and people. His story reminds us that the pioneering days in Canada are not all in the far distant past, and that mastering the environment has always been an important vehicle of entrepreneurial success in this country. It is a point that Michael Bliss has made as well, but in a different way. The Spilsbury story does help to personalize such themes.

Curiously enough, Jim Spilsbury is more than a bit bemused by his own relationship with the upcoast world he so loved, for its changes have not occurred as he had expected. He concludes his book by observing:

> I assumed that improving communication and transportation on the Coast would bring new growth to the camps and villages and make it an easier place to live. Instead it seems to have opened an easy way for all the residents to escape and do their work from remote headquarters in the city. The world I knew has more than changed, it has all but vanished. I find myself visiting silent, deserted bays carpeted to the waterline with second-growth fir, trying to recall the way they looked when they were laced with railways and dotted with float-camps and loud with the voices of eager young men and women convinced they had a place to win and a future to possess (p. 190).

Like whaling and drybelt farming, upcoast pioneering has vanished. One can only hope the bright young men and women have not gone away as well, and that Canada remains a land where hustle works.

J.M. Bumsted is Professor of History at St. John's College, University of Manitoba.

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Read these and other fascinating articles and reviews in the August/September 1988 issue of **The Beaver.**

A Man of Shadows

By Trevor Lautens

THE PARACHUTE WARD
A Canadian Soldier's Wartime Adventures in Yugoslavia

By Brian Jeffrey Street. Lester & Orpen Dennys, Toronto, 1987. 306 pp., illus. $22.95.

The tale, served fast, is terrific. An adventurous Canadian surgeon is parachuted into wartime Yugoslavia to serve Tito's partisans — and uses this as a cover to spy for the British. Decades later he disappears into the western Canadian wilderness. Three years pass. A skull is found, washed down from the slopes. It's his.

That, if *quite* true, and allowing for glib ellipsis, is the stuff of excitement. Collapsed into the tabletalk of an adroit storyteller, Dr. Colin Scott Dafoe's story would be gripping; you could, as the saying goes, dine out on it. Expanded into a book, the vivacity diminishes. Brian Jeffrey Street has conscientiously amassed quite a lot of data but the key to making sense of it has eluded him.

Still, Mr. Street's book is worth reading because the tale, unretouched, is interesting, and he has researched it long and hard. (Too hard, perhaps, on Dafoe's brief but central Yugoslavian experience). But his pursuit seems to have been mind-numbingly dogged: too much Inspector Lestrade, not enough Sherlock Holmes; all gumshoeing, no pulling the tobacco pouch out of the Persian slipper, lighting up the pipe, and creatively working on the mystery. In fairness, Mr. Street freely concedes that he can't answer all the questions and "ended up with more mystery than I could solve."

Colin Scott Dafoe was born in 1909 in Madoc, Ont., one of a distinguished Canadian family whose extensive cousinage included John W. Dafoe, famed editor of the *Winnipeg — nee Manitoba — Free Press*, and Dr. Allan Roy Dafoe, who delivered the Dionne Quintuplets. Colin's father Frank was a successful hardware merchant; he built a family home with a manorial touch. Colin early revealed the restless spirit that marked him as a man: muscularly active, an outdoorsman who was both extroverted and taciturn, given to odd hours, idiosyncratic work habits, and abrupt week-long disappearances that were colourfully if not candidly explained.

Even his more structured movements across the skin of the earth were remarkable, forming almost a gazetteer of place-names. After graduation in medicine from Queen's he worked in Saint John where he met his future wife, Charlotte Small, born to missionary parents in China and also a doctor. He spent a year as a "dogsled doctor" around Lake Athabasca where he became enamored of Robert Service's poem "The Men Who Don't Fit In", which Mr. Street says became his creed: "There's a race of men that don't fit in,/ A race that can't stay still . . ."

Married in Ottawa in 1938, the Dafoes sailed for England and together or separately moved around at dizzying speed. After Dunkirk — Colin was by then in the Royal Army Medical Corps — Charlotte sailed home and spent the war in general practice in Belleville. Colin subsequently expanded his travels to Iraq, Bombay, and in 1942 to North Africa during the dramatic days of Rommel's campaign.

Here he met another surgeon and kindred spirit, New Zealander Lindsay Rogers — whose memoirs provide Mr. Street with his best snapshots of Dafoe's personality. It was evidently through Rogers that both became members of Britain's Special Operations Executive, the intelligence agency under Hugh Dalton, dubbed the "Minister for Ungentlemanly Warfare." Appropriately, SOE's "front" was an office on Baker Street, and its members inevitably were called the Baker Street Irregulars. Dafoe seems to have had only brief intelligence training, mostly on parachute landing techniques but also on sending coded letters, hiding material in his uniform, and such. In 1944 he was parachuted into eastern Bosnia in May and flown back to Italy in October.

Most of the book is taken up with this brief period, a time of danger and excitement and the forging of the lifelong ties that war creates. One, with his boyish-faced guard Miki — shown in several pictures — was especially durable. Dafoe worked as a surgeon with Tito's Partisan guerrillas while they were fighting the Nazis and, not so incidentally, gaining ascendancy over Mihailovic's non-communist Cetniks.

Dafoe set up his field hospital — an ingenious "hammock" made of old parachutes, thus the book's title — and jealously guarded its integrity and precious equipment in the face of enemy attack and the politics and personalities of the situation. Conditions for the wounded were appalling. He was impatient with under-committed nurses. The fighting sometimes drew uncomfortably close; the medical team learned to dismantle the hospital fast at the cry of *pokret* — "get moving!" Quarrels with the head of the British mission, the shadowy Captain Wilson — oddly deprived of a known first name — were never far below the surface.

Dafoe annoyed the British with his open pleasure in giving the Partisan salute and cry, "Death to fascism, freedom to the people!" He generated intense loyalty; the Yugoslavs decorated him for his services (and, remarkably, again posthumously 40 years later).

Then, abruptly, he was gone. He had reached liberated Tuzla and his own notes — the final brief entry made long afterward, in June 1947 — are silent about his last weeks in Yugoslavia. His request to return was refused. The obvious speculation, made by a Yugoslav associate, was that he was too sympathetic to the Partisans, that he openly scorned the English as imperialists and "in his excitement, he threatened the Canadians would free themselves from the embrace of Mother England." (The book's endpapers freely exploit the Norman Bethune-like overtones.)

The rest of Dafoe's life seems strangely anti-climactic, even allowing for the familiar contrast between wartime's quickening and civilian life's hum-drum. He was reunited with Charlotte — characteristically, he came home unannounced and, arriving in Belleville at 2 a.m., wondered if he should wake her up; he and his taxi driver spent several hours over coffee at an all-night diner discussing the matter. He was, she thought, little changed, "amazingly in control of himself". He spent several years of not notably successful medical study and work in Britain. The insatiable traveller settled down to medical practice in Edmonton in 1950 and stayed there 19 years, barring the usual professional breaks and holidays elsewhere. There was tragedy: the suicide of a son, aged 15. And some eccentricities: at an Edmonton football game a spectator made disparaging remarks about the hometown Eskimos. After the game Dafoe passed by, wordlessly decked him with a short right to the jaw, and walked on.

Then came the astonishing disappearance, on 29 July 1969. (Clumsily tied together in the book; it will help readers who reach page 250 to know that the episode picks up again abruptly at page 285.) At age 59, Colin Scott Dafoe — edgy for a few days, Charlotte recalled — "stormed away" after spoiling a roll of film while the couple were holidaying at Waterton Lakes National Park along the Alberta-British Columbia-U.S. borders. Charlotte went on to a prearranged holiday in Toronto: Dafoe's erratic disappearances (and, as in the case of his return from Europe, reappearances) were so habitual that evidently she didn't contact police for a week. An RCMP search came up empty. Suicide was suspected. Three years later hikers in the park found a skull. It was positively identified as Dafoe's. It showed no injury.

But — what about the spying? Where the cloak, where the dagger? Novel and film and television have, of course, romanticized the nature of intelligence work, much of which is simply passing on gossip and a few suspect facts — reporting without the byline. (Which explains why

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such unlikely Danger Men as Somerset Maugham and Malcolm Muggeridge tried their hand at it.) Still, it requires discretion and duplicity, also standard journalistic tools. Was Dafoe, primarily or incidentally, a spy in Yugoslavia? Was his enthusiasm for the Partisan cause a pose? Was he madly double-agenting all along? And — afterwards?

Such information is hard to dig up, and Mr. Street hasn't dug up enough of it or speculated engagingly about it. Dafoe gave some speeches and interviews after his return from Yugoslavia which included praise for Tito's government; the RCMP dropped by and reminded him of the Official Secrets Act. In 1948 he applied for a fellowship with a Swedish institute that — asserts a source whom Mr. Street says insists on anonymity — turned out to have an intelligence role attached. Dafoe variously spoke against the American role in Vietnam and yet accepted a Pentagon invitation to a U.S. special warfare centre where Charlotte said his brains were picked exhaustively. Bill Gillanders, an old friend who knew him as well as anyone, insisted that Dafoe was always a strong advocate of capitalism. When he disappeared the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency quietly — what else? — conducted an investigation separate from the RCMP's.

It seems unlikely that Dafoe was ever more than a minor cog in the intelligence machine. But maybe he was an important agent — for one side or the other or both. Maybe he was, as the saying goes, snuffed — by one side or the other (or both?). Bizarre but, given the absurdities of our times, narrowly possible. It's a mystery all right, and this reader wishes Mr. Street had spent less time trotting around Yugoslavia and more on trying to unravel it. His energy and enthusiasm are faultless. His book is a tease.

Trevor Lautens is a Vancouver writer and editor.

In the Footsteps of Peary

By David J. Olesen

NORTH TO THE POLE

By Will Steger with Paul Schurke. Random House of Canada Ltd., Toronto, 1987. 339 pp., illus. $28.95.

Each spring, in recent years, a varied group of adventurers sets out over the frozen Arctic Ocean toward the North Pole. Some succeed and reach their goal; many do not. The cynics and detractors have their day, cluck-clucking over the (to them) misguided souls who seek to stand at the top of the world. It is always easy, from outside such efforts, to find fault with them.

Yet every now and then a polar expedition comes north and captures the world's imagination, putting to rest, even if briefly, the nattering of the nay-sayers.

One such expedition was that of Will Steger, Paul Schurke, six more team members (two of them Canadian), and forty-nine sled dogs, which left the northernmost point in Canada in early March 1986. Their goal was as straightforward as it was difficult — to reach the North Pole *without resupply or outside assistance*. On 1 May six team members along with 20 dogs stood proudly at that point on the globe which for nearly two months had been their *raison d'etre*.

North to the Pole is the firsthand account of that journey — the first fully verified attainment of the North Pole without resupply. The success of Robert Peary in reaching the Pole in 1909 is generally accepted; in fact, the Steger-Schurke expedition did much to lend credence to Peary's claim.

The object here is to review not the journey, but the book describing it. It is a gripping account, especially to anyone with a standing interest in the history of Arctic and Antarctic exploration. Here, in the terse, simple prose of two modern explorers, the daily struggle of an epic journey unfolds.

This is not a book for the squeamish, or for those who hold too dear the image of polar exploration as gentlemanly, noble, and highly civilized work. It is, deep down, all of those, but they come encased in sweat, blood, grease, excrement, frost, and tears. The beauty of this

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book lies in its description of the experience in common terms, just as Nansen and Peary described the high Arctic in the common literary language of *their* day. In short, we modern readers can feel, in our gut, what Steger and Schurke mean, because they speak to us in the present tense — the 1980s — with a sense of both humour and drama.

While reading the book, it is useful to bear in mind that it is now possible to sip champagne at the Pole beside a chartered aircraft — and that this would be less expensive than getting there by the "traditional" method. As during all journeys by an age-old mode of travel, one is occasionally struck by the question, not of "where am I?" but of "*when* am I?" This *deja vu* aspect of their historic journey is not lost on Steger or Schurke. They remark with wonder at learning the same lessons that Peary learned — how to cross an open lead of sea water, for example, by using a huge chunk of floating ice as a ferry for dogs, sleds, and people.

The authors tell their story day by day, one day being one chapter. The earliest chapters are much longer than the latter ones, since there is initially much background to give the reader. But gradually the pace quickens, the suspense builds, the crisis unfolds, and, at last, the hard-won goal is attained. Several informative appendices follow the narrative, giving summaries of the expedition's equipment, psychological and medical tests, rations, etc.

I read *North to the Pole* during a stretch of bitterly cold January weather, when the thermometer here was flirting with -50 degrees C. for days on end. I have travelled in the Arctic with Steger, and worked behind dog teams with Schurke. However, even with all of these common denominators, the account of this journey stretched my imagination. The numbers alone are staggering: 49 dogs, 1200 pound sleds, 70 below zero.

Will Steger is an enigmatic man, a visionary if ever there was one. This quality, and the problems it sometimes brings with it, are not brushed off in this account. It is an honest presentation of all the events and people that intertwined to make the journey succeed. The book is as much a lesson in human dynamics and inner strength as it is a portrayal of pack-ice dog sledding.

The book includes a collection of excellent black and white photographs to aid the reader's visualization. Steger is a veteran and gifted expedition photographer. Surprisingly, the vocabulary is simple enough to get the book classed as "juvenile literature" by some arbitrary official standard. I hope this does not detract from its adult readership.

To sum up, *North to the Pole* is the story, well told, of the quest for a time-honoured goal and of the seven men and one woman and forty-nine dogs who achieved it, step by step.

David J. Olesen lives at Fort Reliance, NWT. He is a freelance writer and a professional sled dog breeder, trainer and long distance racer.

Bliss, Bumsted Take Prizes

The Beaver is proud to congratulate two contributors who have recently won major Canadian literary awards. They are:

- **Michael Bliss,** winner of the $10,000 National Business Book Award for his *Northern Enterprise: Five Centuries of Canadian Business.*
- **John M. Bumsted,** winner of the $5,000 J.W. Dafoe Foundation Book Prize for his *Land, Settlement and Politics on Eighteenth Century Prince Edward Island.*

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Rendering Unto Caesars

Professor Robin Fisher's review of Peter C. Newman's *Caesars of the Wilderness* [*The Beaver,* February/March 1988] strikes me as particularly mean-spirited. Fisher uses some 3,500 words to castigate every aspect of Newman's work: He calls Newman's approach "a very slippery piece of logic"; his language "high-voltage, over-blown"; his prose "more like a side of [French] fries . . . bright packaging but not much nourishment"; Newman's research "regrettably does not utilize the best, and most recent work". Fisher earlier notes that "Newman has taken no notice of anything that I [Fisher] have said or written . . ." Is Fisher subconsciously grading his own papers "best", and feeling annoyed that they were not used? He goes on to say that due to Newman's omission, he does not "feel in any way constrained by my attempt to be helpful". And he certainly isn't.

According to Fisher, Newman's sources are "outdated and eclectic" and he uses his information "indiscriminately". "Irrelevant nonsense is given equal time with significant facts of knowledge." Fisher judges that Newman's sources cannot be blamed for "many of the errors of fact and interpretation". He alleges that Newman's misuse of poorly chosen sources leads him to "hopelessly mangle the constitutional development of Vancouver Island and British Columbia".

As if all this is not enough, we learn that Newman is *"laissez-faire"* in details; about larger concepts he is "not very clear". Having attacked Newman's approach, prose, use of sources and his interpretations, Fisher himself succumbs to almost "Newmanesque" language when he says, "Ideas roll around in this book like rocks in a

Peter C. Newman: "Nitpicked"

flooded stream bed; they tumble along and occasionally crack together, all a rubble-rattle in the torrent of words".

Is this relentless criticism justified? Has Fisher, in denigrating Newman's work, never stopped to wonder why so many thousands of people enjoy Newman's two books on the Hudson's Bay Company? What Fisher calls "gossip" most critics find engrossing story-telling.

In elementary fairness to Newman's reputation, your readers, who rely on the authority of *The Beaver,* should know that Newman's books have been reviewed very favourably and prominently in several major U.S. newspapers as well as generally across Canada; I have read more than a dozen Canadian reviews and all but one are favourable. The *Washington Post* and the *Chicago Tribune* featured *Caesars of the Wilderness* on the front page of their Sunday Book Sections.

Thanks to Newman's books, it is incontestable that vast numbers of Canadians and Americans now know a great deal more about the remarkable men who explored and traded from Hudson Bay to the Prairies to the Arctic and to the Pacific under the flags of the Hudson's Bay Company and the Northwest Company. Fisher is even annoyed at Newman for writing, "the forests exploded", to describe the ferociousness of the HBC/Northwest struggle. I like the idea of the "forests exploding". That's exactly what I did when I read Fisher's review.

I winced at Fisher's final bit of cavilling, ". . . Newman claims that he is writing journalism rather than history, but in a sense this book is neither. It is really mythology." No, Professor Fisher, it is not. Newman writes about men, not myths. His work should be applauded, not hastily nitpicked.

Richard Murray,
(Managing Director, Hudson's Bay Company 1959-1972), Victoria.

Robin Fisher replies:
In a part of my review that Richard Murray neither quotes nor misquotes, I wrote that "perhaps I should lay my views on the counter in the hope that Newman will at least come into the store." Evidently Peter Newman has learned something from his writing on the fur trade, since it would appear that he has sent his trading captain instead. But alas, he does not offer much of a deal. It is not even enough to begin negotiations.

In Error

A historic meeting between James Douglas and George Simpson was described, in a caption on page 9 of the February/March issue, as having taken place at Fort Victoria in 1828. This anticipated the establishment of Fort Victoria by some 15 years. The handshake actually took place at Fort St. James in 1828.

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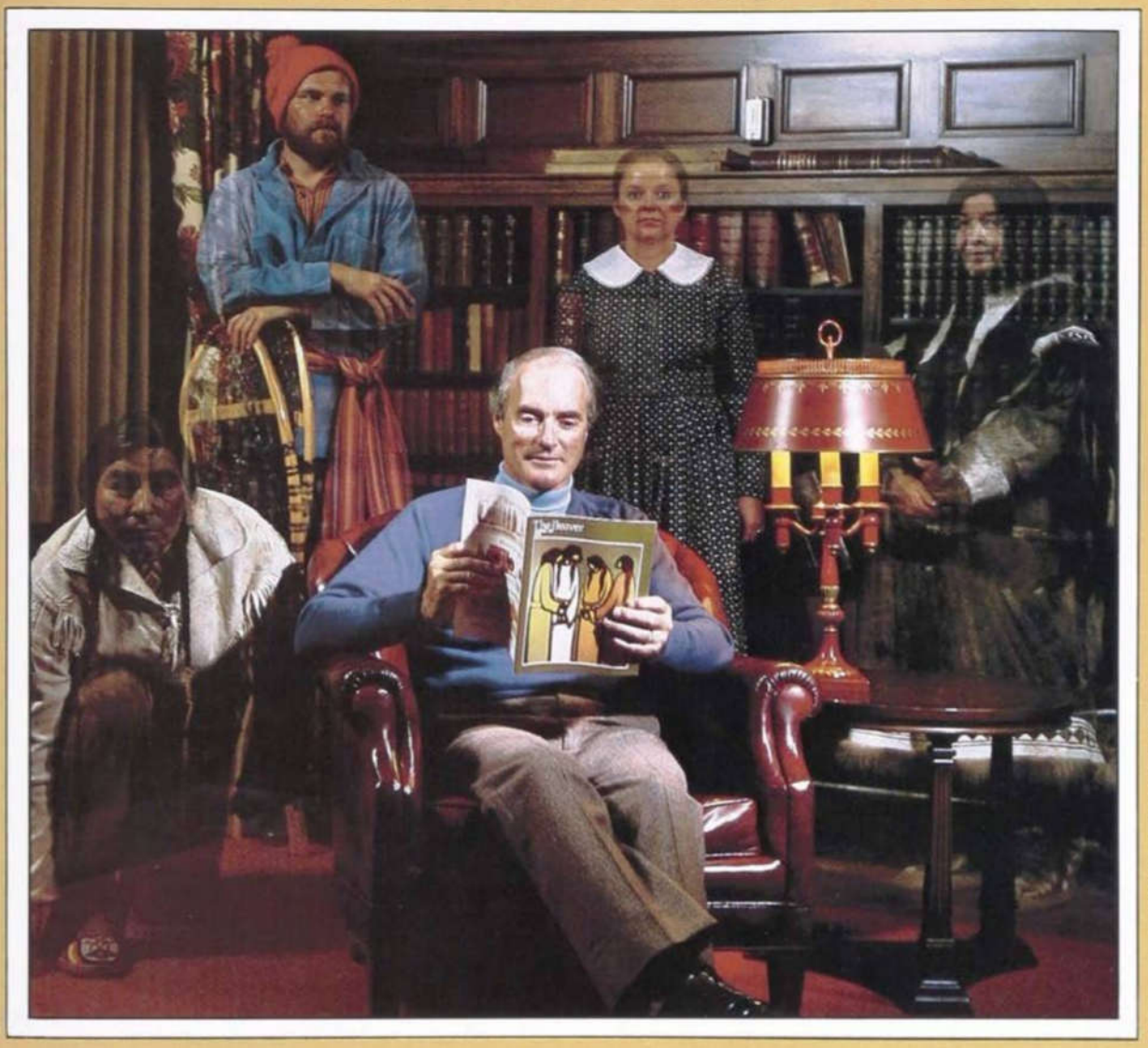

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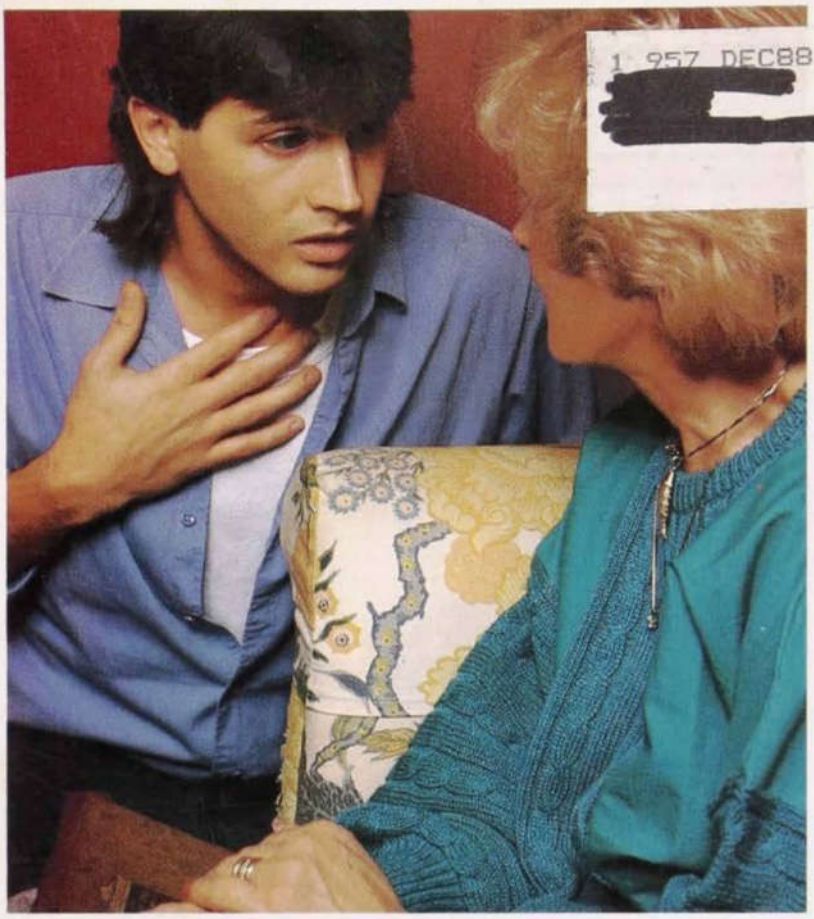

trust me

"Famous last words."

"Come on, Mom, you know I'm a good driver."

"I know. But it's a big occasion and you'll be out with your friends. If you wind up having a few drinks you mightn't be so terrific driving home."

"I won't drink. I promise."

"That's easy enough to say now."

"Well, I can always get a lift back with one of the others."

"I have a better idea. Why don't you all share a cab instead? It won't be that expensive and you might be doing yourselves a favor."

"Maybe you're right. Maybe none of us should bother with a car after all."

"Good. Now tell me, what time do you expect to be home?"

"Aw, Mom."

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